



JENNAE VALE

BOOK TWO
of the Green Sky Series

The
Golden
Hook

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Jennae Vale

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Chapter 1

Edward Sutherland had just been told the most incredible story he'd ever heard, and if it hadn't come from his friend Jameson Mackall, he might not have believed it to be true. It wasn't the kind of thing Jameson would concoct to have fun at Edward's expense, or was it? Still, his head ached trying to grasp the implications of what he'd learned. Danielle was not from this century. She was a time traveler from far off in the future, from the country the colonies would one day become. The United States of America she'd called it. Most shocking of all was that Lady Charlotte, whom he had known most of his adult life, was also a time traveler.

He was, in fact, so shocked by this revelation that it had struck him speechless, which according to anyone who knew him was unheard of. Rising from the table, where only moments before he'd been enjoying breakfast, he scratched his head, unable to reach the itch spreading through his brain. The itch that wanted to deny what he'd heard.

"I believe I need to see to the ship," he mumbled, moving in an unsteady gait towards the door.

"Edward are you well?" Jameson asked, standing and following him. He placed a hand on Edward's shoulder, steadying him.

"Please, let me go. I...I..." As Jameson released his hand, Edward once again headed for the door, but before he could reach it Danielle stopped him.

"Edward, wait." The look of concern on her face made him pause. "I'm so sorry, Edward. I know this is hard to believe, but it is true. I wouldn't lie to you."

He straightened his jacket and squared his shoulders. He was Edward Sutherland. He'd handled far worse in his life than this. He forced a smile to his face and could see that Danielle relaxed as she smiled back at him. "I know you wouldn't."

"Since you are going through town, could you mail this letter for me?" she asked, seeming hesitant as she held it out to him.

He took the envelope from her and glanced at it. "For your friend Susanna," he said. "The one I could not meet."

"Yes. I've been told that if I mail it, she'll receive it in the future."

The future. She was asking him to mail a letter to a woman that wouldn't even exist for nearly three hundred years.

Danielle eyed him with concern. "Are you all right? You look a little green around the gills."

"I'll be fine. It's just that you've told me something that was unbelievable to me until a few moments ago. In fact it's still unbelievable to me." He glanced from one concerned face to the next. "I need some time."

His friends stared at him in silence, seeming unsure of what to do or say. There was nothing more he wished to hear. His only thought was to escape to the one place he believed would give him the time and space he needed to comprehend this unbelievable news.

He moderated his tone to sound as pleasant and ordinary as possible. "I'll mail your letter, but first I'll see to *The Dagger*. Enjoy your meal." Tucking the letter into his pocket, he hurried from the house before they could stop him, escaping to the normalcy that was life on the docks in St. George's.

Men swarmed the piers as ships offloaded goods and took on passengers. Edward Sutherland was the quartermaster of *The Dagger* and as such, it was his duty to see that the men aboard were happy. He kept the peace, settled disputes and was a go-between for the men and the captain.

He pushed and shoved his way through the throngs surrounding the wharf area. The captain's quarters aboard *The Dagger* were his destination, and he was almost there.

"Sutherland!"

He turned to find First Mate Hawes closing in on him. He nodded to his friend and tipped his tricorne cap in greeting.

"What's yer hurry?" Hawes caught up with him, grabbing his arm.

"No hurry," Edward lied, brushing off Hawes' hand. He hit the gangplank at a jog and was on board in the blink of an eye.

Hawes was right behind him. "Ye seem troubled."

"I am, and I need time alone to think. If anyone needs me, I'll be in the captain's quarters." He didn't think it would be a good idea to share his newfound knowledge with Hawes, or anyone else for that matter. They'd surely believe he'd gone round the bend.

Unsettled as he was, Edward stood motionless in the center of the room that Jameson and Danielle were calling home these days. They wouldn't be back for some time, and he needed a place to calm himself. Lady Charlotte would want them to stay in her home as long as possible, so he had the place to himself for now.

What was he to do with this inconceivable gift of knowledge he'd been given? His thoughts bounced here and there about his head occasionally crashing like a rogue wave and sending ripples of

disbelief accompanied by the need to make sense of it all rushing through his head which ached mightily from it all. Doomed to an endless battle taking place between his common sense and what could be reality, he sat behind the desk, gazing blindly at the rolled-up map that was set atop it. Their plan to find Christopher Plumb's lost treasure. The men were eager to be on their way, but they would have to wait a day or two for Jameson to return to the ship. Perhaps if Edward focused on the map... It was no use. His mind wandered back to the letter in his pocket and the issue of time travel. Removing it he gazed at the address which read Susanna Cole, NYC Party Planning, Grand Street, Brooklyn, New York. He wondered what it might be like to travel to that place and time. How different would it be from what he knew? He was an adventurer in spirit. It was why he'd joined Jameson aboard *The Dagger*. He loved the open sea, the thrill of new ports, and he never backed down from a fight. Glancing at the letter one more time, he placed it back in his pocket. "Later," he said. "Later. For now, it's back to the map."

He unrolled it across the desk and searched for stones to hold it in place at the corners. Three were handy leaving him in search of a fourth. Opening the center drawer of the desk, he found a perfectly circular stone. "This will do." He removed it and was about to put it in place on the map when he noticed it was a most unusual rock. One half looked like the sand on the beach and the other like the ocean they sailed upon. In the center appeared to be a cresting wave. He held it up to the light, which passed through the upper half. *How strange*, he thought. "Where did Jameson find *this*?" He tossed it in the air and as it landed in his hand, he turned it over. The back looked much like the front. He turned it back and then turned it once again before noticing that his legs had begun to wobble. Edward reached for the desk to steady himself, but it was no longer there. His eyes became unfocused as everything around him moved, rolling back and forth like the waves of the ocean. His body trembled as dizziness overcame him. Wanting to run, Edward found he had no control over what was happening to him. He wondered if he were dying and if so, how long it would take for his soul to pass from his body and soar to the heavens.

Then, just as quickly as it had begun, everything stopped. His vision cleared, his legs regained their stability, and everything around him stopped moving. As his eyes adjusted, he realized he was no longer in the captain's quarters. But what was most concerning was that he was no longer on *The Dagger*. Gone were the towering masts and familiar crew members. This vessel had no masts and much of it had been painted white. He turned slowly, so as not to attract attention from the strangely dressed people milling nearby, and

looked out at the sea. Closing his eyes, he took a deep breath of the sea air and collected his thoughts.

“Are you enjoying the trip?”

He turned to find an older woman standing by his side. “Trip?” He hoped his eyes didn’t give him away. Wherever he was, Edward instinctively knew he must not let anyone see that he was lost. He steadied himself, taking a deep breath and removing any sign of confusion from his face.

“Yes. The cruise. Isn’t it wonderful?” she asked, as she leaned on the rail next to him, gazing out across the water to the horizon.

Scanning the deck of this unknown ship, he noted many men and women standing at the rail, strolling the deck and seated on unusual chairs. The boat made a low rumbling sound as it moved without sails. Where was he and how had he gotten here?

“Seasick?” the woman asked. That brought him up short. Edward Sutherland had never been seasick in his life, he certainly would not start now. He smiled at her, determined to show he was not sick in the least, and wondered if perhaps the woman could help him.

“I just have a few things distracting me.”

“What could possibly have you distracted from the beautiful sunset?”

He checked his pocket for the letter, relieved it was still there. “There’s someone I wish to find, and I’m afraid I don’t know quite where to start. Do you happen to know anything about Brooklyn, New York?”

“I take it your accent is real and not part of the costume.”

Edward had no idea how to respond to that so he took out the envelope and held it out for the woman. “I must find this woman.”

She glanced at the letter, not taking it from him. “Oh. Is she your girlfriend?”

He should probably agree. No need to draw unwanted attention to himself. “Yes. She is.”

“Well, it’s a good thing we’re heading to New York then.” She laughed and touched his arm.

He feigned a chuckle. He was on board a ship heading to New York. At least he knew that much. He searched the horizon for any sign of Bermuda, but saw nothing.

“Wasn’t Miami fun?” she asked.

“Aye,” he replied though he had no idea what a Miami was.

He needed to move, but he didn’t wish to be rude. Being a pirate didn’t mean that he wasn’t also a gentleman. He offered her his arm and then walked with her along the ship’s rail. He wasn’t sure where he was or how he’d gotten there, but he was also unsure of some other things. This woman’s dress was not like those worn by the women of

his time, but there was something else about her that was very different. Her hair was worn in an unusually short cut and her face seemed different. It was softly painted with a pink glow on her cheeks. Her eyelashes were long and thick. They were so feathery in fact that he wondered what strange creature might be living on them. Edward realized he was staring at her and quickly glanced away. "When will we arrive in New York?" he asked.

"Tomorrow morning. I hate to see this cruise end. I've really enjoyed it, but it's back to work for me on Monday. What about you? What do you do?"

"I'm a pirate," he replied.

She laughed at this. "You're very funny. Of course you're a pirate."

"I'm a pirate and the year is 1724. And what year is it where you are from, my lady?" he asked, hoping she would think his question amusing and not suspect.

"I see. You want to remain in character, don't you? It's 2021 and we have all sorts of wonderful things in this time." She winked at him and laughed again.

His head felt as though it were stuffed with cotton. Thinking it best to say something to this woman, he opened his mouth to speak and then closed it just as quickly.

"Marilyn!" A man came rushing across the deck towards them. "I've been looking for you everywhere. Thought you might have fallen overboard."

"I'm right here, honey. I told you I was going to go for a walk. I was just speaking with this nice gentleman." She indicated Edward with a nod of her head in his direction.

"Rex Mason," the man introduced himself.

"Edward Sutherland." Edward shook the man's hand.

"I hope my wife hasn't been talking your ear off."

The woman playfully slapped her husband's arm. "It was nice meeting you," she said. "We should go." She took her husband's hand and walked away calling back to Edward over her shoulder. "I hope we'll see you at the party tonight."

Edward watched them walk away as the woman spoke to her husband. "He looked a little lost, so I thought I should stop and make sure he was all right." They both peeked back over their shoulders at him.

Edward turned away and headed to one of the strange chairs made of a material he was unfamiliar with. It wasn't wood, and the seat wasn't cloth. His hand ran over it as he sat back, placing his legs in front of him, half sitting and half lying down. It was quite comfortable, perhaps he could sleep here tonight. Although, he knew to be concerned about drawing the attention of the captain or his

men. He was a stowaway and did not wish to find himself thrown overboard. No one seemed to pay much attention to him, so he felt certain that if he could just remain unnoticed for the next several hours, he would arrive in the port of New York and disembark with the rest of the passengers.

The sun was setting. He should close his eyes, pretend to sleep, and hope no one would question his presence. But the sounds of laughter and unusual music drifted to him—and Edward was never one to ignore the call of excitement. No matter what port he found himself in, he could always find the most exhilarating places to enjoy himself. Why should his time on this unknown ship be any different? Throwing caution to the wind, he decided to take a chance on being able to blend in with the others.

Following the sounds as they grew louder, he realized they were below deck.

“Are you going to the party?” A pretty woman approached, headed for the stairs that would lead below deck.

“Aye.” Edward replied.

“I haven’t seen you before.”

She had caught him.

“You must have boarded in Miami. I’ve been on the cruise since it started off in New York.”

She continued on down the stairs, and Edward followed along behind her. “My name’s Emma,” she said.

“Edward,” he introduced himself with a bow.

“Nice to meet you. Are you on the ship alone?”

“I am.” He noted that the people of this time seemed quite friendly. As a pirate, suspicion came naturally to him and he expected it from others. Especially from people he was meeting for the first time.

“Come on. I’ll introduce you to my friends.” She took his hand, which surprised him considering they’d just met. He had a lot to learn about this time period. Emma led him through the crowded room to a group of men and women, who again looked the part of pirates and ladies of his time, but there was also something different—as the woman he’d met earlier had been. Emma introduced him to everyone. “This is Joey, Laura, Steve, Brittany, Rob and Jasmine.”

None of them seemed suspicious that he was a stowaway and so he felt safe continuing to enjoy himself without fear of being discovered.

They placed a drink in his hand. It wasn’t whisky or ale. In fact it was a vibrant blue. The tall, thin glass was decorated with fruit and as he placed it under his nose, did not smell familiar to him. He wasn’t sure what it was, but everyone was drinking the same thing, so he followed suit. He made a face as he swallowed the sickly-sweet drink.

One of Emma's friends noticed and said, "Not your style, huh?"

"I prefer whisky," Edward admitted.

"Em, get the man a whisky," Joey said.

"Will do." She disappeared, leaving him with her friends, who all seemed to stare at him.

"You've got the best costume here," Joey said. "Even your gun looks real."

"It is real," Edward replied.

Emma returned with his whisky and handed it to him. Edward swallowed it in one gulp.

"You're joking, right?" Rob asked.

"Of course he is," Jasmine said. "Can't you tell he's having fun with you?"

"Yeah. I guess so." They turned away, leaving him with Emma.

"Wanna dance?" she asked.

He glanced around at the men and women writhing all over the room and thought to himself, *Why not, Edward?* He was a quick study and as he followed this young woman to the center of the crowd; he observed what others were doing and was sure he could mimic their movements with ease.

"You're a wonderful dancer," Emma said.

His lips curled up in a smug smile. "Thank you," he replied.

"What part of England are you from?"

"London." He assumed there was still a London.

"I've always wanted to go. Maybe next year."

He noted she was giving him the look. The one he saw on the faces of most women he came in contact with. Edward was known to be a rake in his time and under normal circumstances wouldn't have allowed this opportunity to pass him by, but he was in unfamiliar territory and could not let his guard down, even for a woman as pretty as Emma.

After another whisky and another dance, Edward felt he should excuse himself. "I must get some rest. I've much to do when the ship docks."

Emma appeared disappointed. "Are you sure? I'm not even tired yet."

Was she expecting more from him than just a dance? He knew the answer to that question as well as he knew that she would easily succumb to his charms, but distraction tonight would mean trouble tomorrow. "I'm quite sure. It has been a pleasure, Emma." He bowed slightly and turned to walk away.

"Maybe I'll see you in the morning. We can exchange numbers."

He turned back to see her hopeful face. Edward smiled and gave her a brief wave of his hand. *Numbers? What numbers? Do numbers*

have a different meaning in this time? He would add this to the things he must learn if he were to survive here among these people. He felt for the letter in his pocket and hoped Susanna Cole would be able to assist him.

Chapter 2

Edward spent the rest of the night on deck, making himself as comfortable as possible in one of the many chairs lined up near the rail. He took one tucked away in an area that seemed less traveled by those on board and hoped no one would notice. Thankfully they hadn't.

He watched the sunrise as they passed by buildings so tall they seemed to touch the sky and instinctively knew there were many wondrous things yet to be seen. He ducked as something flew close overhead emitting a loud thumping sound as it passed and headed towards the towering structures they were approaching. Glancing up he could see that it was safe to stand erect once again. In the distance he saw more objects flying through the sky. The harbor was full of ships filled with large box-like structures, dwarfing the ship he was on as it passed by them. The oddities of the world he found himself in were both unsettling and awe inspiring.

"There you are." Emma was headed his way. "Where are your things? Aren't you packed yet?"

"Good morning, Emma." He gave her a slight bow, tipping his tricorn cap in greeting.

"I've got all my things right here." She indicated a small trunk-looking item that rolled across the deck beside her. "I'm glad I found you. Where's your phone? I'll put my number in it so you can call me."

"I have no *phone*." Was this going to be a problem? Was it necessary to have a *phone* to survive in this time?

She seemed upset with him. "If you weren't interested you only had to say so. There's no need to make things up just to get rid of me."

"I'm sorry, Emma. I've offended you." He wasn't sure what he'd done, but he wasn't about to make amends. He needed to be free of her so that he could move about without encumbrance.

"One of these days I'll learn. You good looking guys are all very self-involved, aren't you?" Emma grasped the handle of the rolling bag that held her belongings, pointed her nose in the air, and left him wondering how on earth he was going to understand the people of

this time.

He watched her walking towards her friends who were all standing in a very long queue. The ship was docking and it seemed that every passenger aboard was waiting to disembark. Edward walked toward the crowd and noticed that they all had papers in their hands. He had none. He couldn't allow himself to be caught now that he'd reached his destination. Heading in the opposite direction, he glanced over the side of the ship. A good pirate could always escape any situation and he was a better pirate than most.

People were gathered in one small area where the gangplank was being lowered, but there was no one in sight further down. This was his chance. He found a rope that had been used to moor the ship to the dock and climbed over the rail, using it to slide down to the dock. Once there, he straightened his clothes and looked for someone who might know where to find Susanna Cole.

Passengers from the ship streamed by him as they headed for the street, which was filled with many unusual conveyances. There were no horses! He couldn't believe his eyes.

How were they moving? Strange sounds came from them and because there were so many it was quite loud. He was fascinated, so much so that he hadn't noticed Emma passing him. She was alone, her friends gone on their own way. "Emma," he called to her.

She turned to him, her face a curious mix of irritation, curiosity and hope. "Yes."

"I must apologize for my behavior. I need your help."

Her eyebrows collided as she scrutinized him.

He pulled the letter from his pocket and showed it to her. "I must find her."

"You've got a girlfriend? No wonder you didn't want to give me your number. Why didn't you just say so?"

"I don't know. It never occurred to me." He hoped he was saying all the right things.

"My car is in the parking garage. I'll need to Google it to be sure, but I think I can drop you off." Her irritation with him seemed to have passed.

"Does that mean you'll help me?" he asked.

She stopped walking, tipped her head and looked at him as though he were quite daft. "Am I speaking a different language? Of course it does."

"Thank you, Emma. You don't know how much this means to me." Relief swept over him. If he could just get to Susanna Cole, all would be well.

"It'll be my good deed for the day." She motioned for him to follow her. "This way."

“Must everyone do a good deed every day?” he asked.

“What?” She crinkled her nose at him.

“You said it was your good deed for the day,” he explained.

“You’ve never heard that expression before?” Emma asked.

“I’m afraid not.”

“Hmph. It would be nice if everyone did a good deed every day, but most people don’t care enough to even bother.” She rolled her eyes seeming to have lost the enthusiasm she had when he first met her. “This is my car.”

He hid the wonder he was experiencing on seeing the shiny red conveyance she was now placing her rolling bag inside. Reminding himself that he was a visitor from another time, it would do him no good to let everyone he met know where he was from. All he had to do was remember his own reaction when he’d been told about Danielle. She opened the door for him and he got in, noting the many unusual materials surrounding him.

Emma walked around to the other side and got in. Edward glanced out the window and was surprised when the *car* roared to life. He tensed in his seat unsure of what was to come.

“Relax. I’m a very good driver,” Emma assured him.

As the car moved away from the dock, Edward held tightly to the door and did his best to relax. After a few moments and realizing that he wasn’t in any imminent danger, he let go of the breath he’d been holding. Deciding that he would enjoy the experience. He was Edward Sutherland. What would the men of *The Dagger* think of him if they knew he had been less than brave?

“So what do you do for work?” Emma asked as they turned onto another street.

“I work aboard a ship.” He found he didn’t need to lie to her.

“Out of what port?” Emma never looked at him as she seemed very focused on the road in front of her.

“Bermuda.” Again, no need to lie.

“And you misplaced your girlfriend?”

“You could say that.” Edward was sure Emma was waiting for a better explanation, but he had none.

“Well, we’ll be there in a few minutes.”

“Thank you for coming to my assistance, Emma.”

“You’re welcome.” The car came to a stop. “That’s the building, right there.” She leaned across the car, placing her arm in front of him and pointing to the building she’d stopped in front of. “Do you need me to wait for you? I mean, just in case she’s not there.”

“I couldn’t ask you to do another thing for me. You’ve been too kind.” He looked at the door and then back to Emma. “How do I get out of here?”

Positioned as she was, she again reached across and pulled a latch. The door swung open. Once outside, he thanked her again, closed the door and watched her drive away.

Boxes were piled high around the offices of NYC Party Planning, crowding in on the desk where Susanna Cole sat going through emails and messages from friends and business acquaintances. This had been one of the hardest times of her life.

Life wasn't the same without Danielle. She'd lost her best friend and business partner. They worked together and lived together. She was completely alone now and more depressed than she'd ever been in her life.

Her head popped up as there was a knock at the door. "Come in."

The door opened and the sight in front of her was like a slap in the face. Some idiot had decided it would be a good idea to remind her of her loss by showing up in pirate costume. "Was there a costume party someone forgot to tell me about?" she snapped.

"I'm sorry. Costume party?" the man asked.

"I'm not in the mood right now. What can I do for you?" Maybe if she sounded cranky enough he'd just turn around and leave.

"I need your help," he said, stepping closer.

"You've come to the wrong place. I'm no longer accepting new clients. The business is closing for the foreseeable future." That should do it. There was nothing more to be said. If he was looking for a party planner he was going to have to go elsewhere.

"But this is the right address. You're Susanna Cole, am I correct?" He raised his eyebrows and offered a questioning gaze.

His surly English accent was not charming her. The more she looked at him the more irritated she became. Seeing him was like rubbing salt into her wound. "Seriously, what's with the outfit?" Whoever this guy was, he was definitely in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Reaching into his jacket pocket, the man pulled out an envelope and looked at it. "I was directed here by the people on board the ship. This is NYC Party Planning, Brooklyn, New York, isn't it?" He straightened his coat and stood at attention.

Susanna noted his height. Easily over six feet tall, very handsome and from the way he stood it seemed he might be in the military. No

matter. She'd had enough of being toyed with. "I don't know what cruel joke you're playing, but it is not appreciated. My friend recently drowned on a pirate cruise to Bermuda and I'm, I'm..." She wasn't going to cry. Not in front of this stranger. She took in a deep breath, held her head high and stood up.

"I know the whole of it. Your friend Danielle fell overboard." His voice was soft and low, filled with understanding.

Was he purposely trying to upset her? How did he know who Danielle was? "I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

He threw his head back in apparent exasperation before inhaling deeply and looking at her. "Please don't. I'm sorry. I understand you're upset, but do let me finish what I have to say." He paused, gazing at her with what seemed an impatient glare.

She kept silent.

"Thank you. I've a letter here for you from Danielle. It will explain everything." He held the letter out for her to take.

Susanna's hands shook as she took it from him. She couldn't help but feel skeptical. She'd seen Danielle go overboard and disappear beneath the waves. They'd searched for her for days, as had the Coast Guard and they found nothing.

"Did she give this to you before we went on the cruise?" She glanced down at the letter. It was Danielle's handwriting. There was no mistaking it. Everything down to the little heart she used to dot the letter I.

"No. She gave it to me yesterday morning." He seemed to be watching and waiting for her reaction.

"This better be good," she said. At this point, she was ready to throw him out the door and lock it behind him. If that didn't work, she'd call the police, but her curiosity was piqued. She opened the letter and read.

Dear Susanna,

I know you aren't going to believe this, but I'm alive. I mailed this letter to you in the hopes that it would somehow reach you and I could tell you what happened after I fell overboard. I know you're probably reading this with a good deal of skepticism, but it's true. I've somehow managed to travel back in time. I think it had something to do with the unusual green sky that night, but I can't be sure. I just wanted you to know that I'm all right. I'm living in Bermuda in the eighteenth century. Can you believe it? Things are so different in this time, but it's all good because I've met someone. It sounds weird to say, but he's a pirate. You know me, always looking for the bad boys, only this time I found one and he is everything I've ever wanted. He's sweet, kind, caring and I could go on and on. Please don't be sad about losing me. I'm not dead. I'm very much alive and I'm happier than I've ever been.

I love you and I miss you more than you know.

Danielle

She'd read the letter three times and was thinking this couldn't possibly be true, and yet it was right there in her hands. She needed clarity. Susanna looked up from the letter, her hands trembling. The man was still there watching her.

"Sit." She motioned for the man to sit in the chair placed by her desk. Susanna sat opposite him. "Explain. Who are you? Why are you here? How did you get this letter? I need answers."

"My name is Edward Sutherland. I am a pirate. I have somehow traveled here from Bermuda in the year 1724. Believe me when I tell you that I am as perplexed by all of this as are you. I am a friend of Captain Jameson Mackall and his lady, Danielle York. Danielle asked me to mail that letter for her and I had every intention of doing so when suddenly I somehow found myself aboard a ship headed for New York in whatever time this is."

"Wow! If you managed to get here, why didn't Danielle come with you?"

"I was alone and aboard *The Dagger* when this happened." Poor guy, he really did seem confused by it all. "I don't know all the answers as to how this works, but Danielle is happy with Jameson. I believe she did not wish to leave."

"Maybe she didn't think she could." That had to be it. Why would she stay in a place without electricity, cell phones and cars?

"It's possible." He seemed to be wondering the same thing.

She set the letter down on her desk, flattening it with the palms of her hands. "I'm guessing that if you managed to get here that you can go back."

Edward raised an eyebrow. "I don't even know how I got here, how could I possibly know how to get back?"

Susanna stood, grabbed her purse and headed for the door.

"Shall I join you?" Edward asked.

"I don't know what other choice you have." She hurried out the door, not waiting for him to follow her, and headed for the stairs. Once on the street she hailed a cab. She turned to see Edward was still right behind her before getting in and scooting over to make room for him to join her.

He closed the door as she gave the driver her address and they sped off down the street.

"How did you get to my office from the ship?" Susanna asked.

"One of the other passengers, a woman, took me." he smiled and eyed her as if he had a secret and was wondering if she cared.

She didn't. Susanna had been so worked up over everything that she hadn't taken the time to really see him. Of course she had noted

he was tall and very good looking. Now she was noticing other things. He was wearing clothing that was definitely not of this time. Despite the fact the outfit was antique, it still looked good on him. His broad shoulders filled out the jacket. His fingers were long and his hands strong. They didn't seem as work-worn as one might expect of a pirate. He also had a sexy British accent and smelled of the sea. Not that icky low tide smell, but the fresh as a breeze smell along with something else she couldn't identify.

When Susanna woke up this morning, this was definitely not something she was expecting to happen. She planned on packing all the boxes for the movers to take to storage and then locking her door for the last time. Running this business without Danielle was never what she wanted. It was a two-woman operation and had been right from the start. She had plenty of money saved and there was also a good amount in the business bank account to tide her over until she could figure out what to do with her life. "I want to see Danielle. I have to know she's okay and isn't staying for the wrong reasons. Although I can't think of any good ones." If Danielle was in her right mind she should have wanted to return to her own time. Susanna couldn't believe she was even considering this was all true. "We've got to figure out this time travel stuff."

"So you wish to return with me?" he asked, seeming hopeful.

"Don't get any ideas. I won't be staying." She rolled her eyes. Guys like him were so sure of themselves. So sure she'd be under his spell.

"I didn't believe you would be." He glanced out the window of the cab. "I have no designs on you."

"Good. Then we understand each other?" She was sure she'd wounded his fragile male ego, but she really didn't care. Her friend's health and well-being were her only concerns.

"Danielle said that measure for measure we were very much the same. I assumed that to mean I would like you, but I cannot see much of myself in you."

Susanna pursed her lips, narrowing her eyes as she examined him.

"I've no lack of women you know." He turned away from the window to face her.

"I wasn't asking, but I'm sure you don't," she said. *Wow! I really did hurt his feelings.* "So, you thought Danielle meant we'd be good together?"

"It is what she meant." He sounded pretty sure of himself.

"Imagine her trying to fix me up with a man in a different century." A half-suppressed snicker escaped her lips.

"But I'm here now." he said, as if that explained it.

As they approached Susanna's street, she pulled out her wallet ready to pay the driver and tipped her head to look Edward in the eye.

“I don’t know how this conversation ended up here, but we’ve got more important things to worry about.”

The cab stopped in front of her apartment building. She paid the driver and motioned for Edward to open the door. When he couldn’t seem to find the handle she reached across him and pulled it herself, pushing the door wide for him to exit.

He stood on the sidewalk waiting for her to join him and then followed her up the steps to the apartment lobby.

“I’m on the second floor,” she said. Once up the stairs she unlocked the door to the apartment she had once shared with Danielle.

Edward entered and took in the room, eyeing it from floor to ceiling.

“Have a seat. Are you hungry?” As was usually the case with Susanna, she was regretting her behavior. Short of an apology, food was always a good way to make amends.

“I am.” Edward smiled warmly at her, despite the crappy way she’d been treating him.

“Let me get changed and I’ll make us something.” She went into her bedroom, closing the door behind her. Sitting on the bed, she put her head in her hands. “This is unbelievable. Danielle is alive, but in another time.” How was she going to fix this?

Chapter 3

Edward was having a hard time understanding this Susanna Cole.

The young woman aboard the ship had very much enjoyed his company. He had never met a woman he couldn't charm if he wanted. Danielle had been wrong about her friend. Susanna was nothing like him. He was never rude without cause.

He roamed the room examining all of the strange things he came across with much interest. On one shelf there was a small but very fine painting that was clearly Susanna and Danielle. They were smiling and seemed very happy. The loss of her friend had been hard on her, clearly. Knowing she was alive should have brought her joy. Instead she seemed even more upset.

Susanna emerged from the room she'd entered, her dark locks hanging loose across her shoulders. Her face, now more relaxed, was pretty with eyes of the bluest blue. She was no longer pale, color had returned to her cheeks which were now a soft rose. She wore breeches that showed off all her curves and a loose-fitting blouse, both made of materials he'd never seen before. His fingers itched to touch them, but that would be uncalled for and would surely anger her.

"I'm sorry I was so grumpy with you. None of this is your fault." She appeared quite contrite.

"Apology accepted. I hope we can be friends." He was a good study of character. Always able to read a person, Edward could spot a liar, a thief or any number of other character flaws in those he came across. He wasn't seeing anything like that with Susanna. Instead he saw a woman who seemed lost, but who would never want anyone else to know it. She missed her friend, that was obvious, but there was more there and he was intrigued.

"I have a friend, Addie, who's kind of a nerd. She's really into things that are out of the ordinary. I think we should talk to her. She might be able to help." She lifted the flat item she'd been holding in her hand almost the entire time they'd been together and poked at it with her finger. When she finished she waited, holding it close to her mouth. He could hear a strange sound coming from it and then a woman's voice.

“Susanna! Is everything okay?” the voice asked.

She seemed to steel herself before answering. “Yes. I mean, I’m not sure.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Can you come over? I’ll order pizza and you can pick it up on your way. There’s someone here I want you to meet.” She glanced at Edward, giving him a half-smile.

“I can do that. Are you sure you’re okay?”

She turned away from Edward’s questioning gaze. “Yes. Fine. I just need you to help me with something. Oh, and bring your laptop.”

“I’ll be over in a bit then.”

Susanna poked the object again.

“What is that?” Edward asked, pointing at the object in her hand.

“That’s right. You wouldn’t know, would you?” She stared down at the object, then sat down on the settee and motioned for him to join her. “This is a phone. Here.” She held the object out to him.

“So this is the thing Emma spoke of.” It was one of the strangest things he’d ever seen, but he was sure that there were more strange things here in this time. As he held it in his hand he noted there was a weight to it. A dark rectangle covered most of the side facing him. “Is this where the numbers are kept?”

“What are you talking about?” Susanna asked.

“The woman on the ship asked if I had a phone. She wished to exchange numbers.”

Susanna almost fell off of the settee as she laughed. “Yes, this is where the numbers are kept.”

Edward nodded his head, gazing down at the phone. He almost dropped it as it lit up and vibrated in his hand.

Susanna took it from him. “I just got a text message.”

It was unusual for Edward to be speechless, but he was feeling very out of place. Not unusual for a man who’d traveled through time. He watched as Susanna looked at the phone in her hand and then poked at it again with her fingers.

“See, I’m sending a message back to Addie. She’s on her way with the pizza.” She stood and headed out of the room. “I’ll get us some snacks. That should hold you over until she gets here.”

Edward followed her into another room filled with things he didn’t recognize.

“Welcome to my kitchen.” She spread her arms wide, presenting the room to him. “This is the stove. I cook on this. Refrigerator. It keeps things cold. Dishwasher. Washes dishes.”

She touched something over a basin and water began to flow. He was beside her and placing his hand beneath it in the blink of an eye. It was warm. “This is unbelievable.”

"I'll bet you'll be saying that a lot." She turned a knob and the water stopped. She handed him a towel to dry his hands.

He followed her around the apartment and she showed him each room, explaining anything unusual they came across. The last door she opened was to Danielle's room.

"Is there anything we should bring back with us that she may want?" he asked.

"That's very thoughtful of you." Susanna seemed surprised by this. "I'll have to think about it, but I'm sure there are some things she'd like to have." Her favorite robe came to mind along with a framed photo of Danielle and Susanna at one of their first events. "Let's go wait for Addie to get here." She led him back out to what he imagined was her sitting room where he sank into a large soft chair.

"This is very nice," he said. His hand brushed across the fabric, which was again unlike anything he'd ever seen before.

"Thanks. Danielle picked it out. She liked to sit there to read."

Edward could once again hear the loss in her voice. "She's very much alive, Susanna. You will see her again."

"I know it's possible, because you're here. I just don't know how we're going to make it happen, but that's what Addie is for. We'll do some research and just figure this out. There have to be answers and I won't stop until I find them."

"It would be easy for me to be frightened by all of this, but I see adventure in what we are about to do. I hope that you can look on it the same way."

It wasn't much but he was gratified to see his words seemed to release some of the tension she held in her shoulders. "I hope so, too."

"Know that I am here for you. That I will not allow any harm to befall you. I swear to you now, I will guard you with my life."

"That's very chivalrous of you, but I'm pretty good at taking care of myself. I've taken plenty of self-defense classes, so I know a thing or two." For some reason, the way she said that and patted his arm felt patronizing.

"I'm sure you do in this time, but believe me when I tell you that if we are to return to my time, we will be meeting some pretty unsavory characters. You'd do well to allow me to handle them."

Susanna laughed at this. He was startled by her response. Here he had offered his services to see that she was safe and she'd thought it amusing. He would be pleased to show her just how much she was going to need him.

Addie Michaels arrived at Susanna's apartment carrying two

boxes of pizza. "I didn't know what you ordered. They gave me a plain cheese and a pepperoni. I hope that's okay."

"That's perfect." Susanna took the pizza from her hands and placed them on the coffee table. "This is Edward Sutherland. He's the reason you're here."

"Nice to meet you." She extended her hand, which Edward took gently in his.

Susanna noted his awkwardness and smiled. This was going to be interesting. She handed him a plate and a napkin and then poured him some soda. "I know you don't have pizza where you're from, but I think you'll like it." She opened the box and watched as his head tipped this way and that before a smile appeared on his lips.

"It smells wonderful."

"I had no idea that there were places on earth that didn't have pizza," Addie said. "Unbelievable that you could be so deprived."

Once they were all settled with slices and drinks, Susanna knew she had to dive in and explain what was happening. "Addie the reason I called you is that I know you're into all sorts of unusual stuff."

Her friend paused with her pizza half way to her mouth. "True. What's up?"

"Okay. I don't know any way to say this without sounding like I'm losing it, so I'm just going to say it." Susanna quickly glanced Edward's way to see him nodding. "I hope you're ready for this. Edward has traveled through time to get here." She hurried to get the words out, holding up her hand as Addie was about to speak. "And Danielle is alive and living in the eighteenth century." She blew out a big breath, her eyelashes fluttering rapidly as she eyed Addie.

Addie's eyebrows shot up and her mouth gaped in surprise. "Wow! That's amazing!" She turned to Edward. "You have no idea how exciting it is to meet you and how thrilled I am that you're here."

"Well, at least someone is." He looked pointedly at Susanna, who rolled her eyes at him.

"I've been interested in time travel for as long as I can remember. How does it work?" Addie abandoned her pizza to lean closer to him, elbows on her knees and her chin in her hand. "Tell me everything."

"I wish I knew. One minute I was aboard *The Dagger* and the next I was on another ship headed for New York."

Disappointed, Addie collapsed back into her chair.

"We've got to figure this out. I want to see Danielle and make sure

she's okay." Susanna's head swiveled from Edward to Addie and back again.

"I've told you that she's fine and she's where she wishes to be," Edward assured her.

"I know, but there's something to be said for seeing it with my own eyes." She turned to Addie hoping she somehow would know what to do.

"Where exactly is she?" Addie asked.

"Bermuda," Susanna answered.

"And you came from Bermuda, right?" She directed this to Edward who seemed quite relaxed and unbothered by it all.

"I did."

"So Bermuda is the common denominator. We need to go there." She slapped her hands on her knees, appearing very satisfied with her conclusion.

"We'll have to drive south. We can't fly and the chances of a ship leaving for Bermuda right away are slim. To complicate matters, Edward doesn't have any I.D. that would be useful, so I'm not sure how we'd get him to Bermuda."

Addie held out her hands. "Hand me my backpack, please."

Susanna did so, retrieving it from beside the sofa. Addie removed her laptop and set it on the coffee table.

"I'm guessing this has something to do with the Bermuda Triangle." She flipped the computer open. "I'll get myself logged in and then let's see what we can find."

Susanna glanced at Edward who seemed perplexed.

"The Bermuda Triangle?" Edward asked as Addie began pounding away at the keys.

"It's an area around Bermuda where lots of ships and planes have disappeared without a trace," Addie explained.

"Sounds reasonable. How do we know it's true?" Susanna asked.

"There are conflicting theories about the area, but I'm firmly on the 'it's true' team."

While Addie clicked and typed, Susanna took a slice of pizza from the box and doctored it up with red pepper flakes. "Want some?" she asked Edward who was on his second slice.

"What are they?" he asked examining the small container.

"They're spicy," Susanna warned.

"Hot," Addie added.

"I'll try," Edward said.

"Only give him a little," Addie cautioned.

Susanna sprinkled a bit on his slice and watched with a grin as he took a bite. She was disappointed that he had little reaction to it, other than to reach for the peppers and sprinkle more on.

"What were you doing just before you traveled?" Addie asked.

"I was aboard *The Dagger*. I'd just found out about Danielle and Lady Charlotte."

"Lady Charlotte? Is she a time traveler, too?" Susanna asked.

"She is. She's been in my time for quite a long while."

"Fascinating." Addie abandoned the laptop and couldn't seem to take her eyes off of Edward. She was listening intently to every word.

"I needed to be alone to think about everything they'd just told me. I was in the captain's quarters looking over the treasure map."

"There's a treasure map!" Addie was unusually animated by this conversation. She was normally a very shy and introverted woman, but this conversation was bringing her out of her shell.

"Stop interrupting him, Addie. Go on, what happened next?" Susanna asked.

His eyes drifted upward and he tapped his lip as he tried to remember what had preceded his trip to this time. "I was looking for something to hold down the last corner of the map. There was an unusual looking stone in the desk and as I examined it, the earth began to shift beneath my feet."

"So, that was the moment you traveled." Addie turned to Susanna. "It has to have something to do with the stone."

"What kind of stone was it?" Susanna asked.

"It was unusual. Unlike any stone I've ever seen. It was almost as if it were a replica of the beach and the sky." Edward described it for them.

"Can you draw a picture of it?" Addie asked.

"I believe so."

Susanna got him a pen and some paper. Edward held the pen up in front of his face, turning it this way and that in his hands before placing it on the paper. Both women watched as he drew the image for them.

"It looks like it could be a piece of jewelry or something," Susanna said.

"It's too large for that," Edward said.

"Do you still have it?" Addie wondered.

"I don't. Do you really believe that it was the stone that caused the time travel?" He took another slice of pizza from the box and sprinkled it liberally with peppers.

"I'm not sure, but it seems likely." Addie was definitely in her element. "Tell me more about the treasure. You know there are still lots of buried treasures out there waiting to be found."

"It is the treasure of Christopher Plumb. We were given the map from an old friend of Jameson's before his death, but have had no luck in finding it. We're also in possession of a treasure map that belonged

to Domnhaill MacCreary and the crew of *The Savage Wolf*.”

“I’ll look it up. We can see if either of them was ever found.” Addie began typing wildly on the laptop keyboard. After a few minutes of searching, she said, “According to this, Christopher Plumb’s treasure has never been found. There’s a treasure hunter in South Carolina who’s currently searching for it. It says he feels like he’s getting close.”

“Who was the other guy?” Susanna asked Edward.

“Domnhaill MacCreary.”

“I’m not seeing anything here on him, but I’ll keep looking.”

Susanna cleared the plates from the coffee table and put the leftover pizza in the refrigerator. “How are we ever going to do this?” she asked.

“We’ll figure it out, but I don’t know how long that will take.” Addie said.

Edward stretched his arms high overhead. “Is there a place where I could lay down? I spent the night on the ship’s deck and didn’t sleep very well.”

“Sure. You can use Danielle’s bed. And don’t worry, we’ll find a way to get you back home.” She wished she was as confident as she was trying to sound.

Once he’d left the room, Addie was at the computer again. “I’m looking up Edward Sutherland. Maybe that’ll give us some information to work with.”

Susanna sat next to her on the floor.

“Oh, no!” Addie’s hand flew to her mouth.

“What, oh no?” Susanna asked, peering past Addie to see what had gotten her so upset.

“What year did you say he came from?” Addie asked.

“I never said, but I think he told me 1724. Why?”

“This isn’t good, Susanna.”

“Addie what isn’t good?” She scooted closer to her friend so she could see the computer more clearly.

“It says here he was killed by Domnhaill MacCreary on August 30, 1724.”

“We can’t let him go back,” Susanna said.

“We’ve got to. It could change the course of history if he were to just disappear.”

“I think the course of history has already been changed. Danielle is back there, remember?” Susanna stood and went to the window, gazing out on the now darkened street.

“But maybe she was meant to be there,” Addie said.

“And maybe Edward was meant to be here.” Thoughts swirled through her brain. There were so many small details, so many connections that she didn’t understand yet. And she’d thought

planning corporate events was hard! This was completely mind blowing.

“Ugh! This is all so confusing.” Addie closed the laptop and put it on the coffee table then joined Susanna at the window.

“We have to tell him though.” Susanna’s shoulders dropped. How could they possibly let Edward go back to his certain demise?

“Right. Leave it up to him.” Addie hooked her arm through Susanna’s.

“But I want to see Danielle.” When she thought Danielle had drowned, her life had taken a turn down a dark path. Now that she knew she was alive, all Susanna wanted was to see her friend again, she had make sure Danielle was where she wanted to be.

“We might not be able to figure out how to do the time traveling anyway,” Addie was saying. “You know what I think? I think we should go to South Carolina and find this treasure hunter guy.”

“Why?” Susanna asked, truly puzzled.

“I don’t know. Maybe because it would be interesting. It seems like he has the map Edward was looking at before he travelled. I don’t know if there is a connection but it wouldn’t hurt to talk to him. Besides it would get us closer to Bermuda.”

“Addie, I love you, but sometimes you’re such a nerd.”

Addie laughed. “I know. I can’t help it.”

“And I wouldn’t want you to.”

Addie checked her phone. “It’s getting late. I’m going home. I’ll keep researching. Call me when you get up. I bookmarked the page about Edward and MacCreary.”

“Thanks. I’m not sure I want to show it to him.”

Addie stopped on her way to the door and turned to Susanna. “I think you have to.”

“Would you really want to know the day you were going to die?” Susanna asked.

Addie nodded her head vigorously. “If it would help me not die... yes.”

“You’ve got a point.” And she did. Susanna walked Addie to the door. “See you in the morning.”

“Good night.”

This morning all she’d wanted to do was walk away from her business and forget anything and everything about what had happened to Danielle. Now she had a pirate with a death sentence in her apartment and the thought of letting him return to a certain end had her questioning how she could let him go back.

Chapter 4

Edward awoke with a start. The memory of where he was came rushing back, jolting him out of bed. He went to the window and looked down on the street below. A fine drizzle was wetting the ground. People hurried along the sidewalk covering their heads with all manner of things while more of those *cars* sped by. There was a knock at the door before it opened.

“Oh, good. You’re awake.” Danielle looked even lovelier this morning. Fresh from her bed, her hair tousled in an alluring way—he eyed her from his perspective as a rake.

“I made coffee. When you’re ready come on out and I’ll make some eggs and toast.”

“That would be lovely. Almost as lovely as you this morning.” He smiled, hoping it had the same effect on her that it had on most women, but it didn’t.

Susanna narrowed her eyes and scrunched her nose as she shook her head at him. “Ewww... Don’t even!” Turning, she left the room slamming the door behind her.

Edward chuckled. He enjoyed a good challenge and he made up his mind that he would do whatever it took to change Susanna’s mind about him.

Joining her in the kitchen, he took a seat at something that wasn’t a table but instead resembled more of a tavern bar. Susanna placed a mug of steaming coffee in front of him along with a small pitcher of cream and a bowl of sugar. Next came the eggs and toast.

“I hope you like them over easy. If you prefer them scrambled I’ll eat those and make you two more.”

“This will be fine.”

“Butter and jam for your toast.” She slid them across to him along with a knife for spreading.

“Thank you. You’re most kind.”

“After you went to bed last night, Addie looked you up on the computer.”

He stopped with his fork half way to his mouth and put it back down. “I don’t understand.”

“She put your name in the search bar and sure enough we found some information on you.”

“Would that mean that I am famous?” He was flattered to know that even people in this time would know his name.

“I guess you would have been, otherwise we wouldn’t have found you.”

“What did it say about me?” he wondered.

“I’ll get the computer.” Susanna went into the living room and retrieved her computer from the coffee table. She opened it and placed it in front of him. “You can read, right?”

He bristled at her question. “Of course I can read. What do you take me for?”

“Just checking. I wasn’t sure how things worked in your time.”

“We’re not savages.”

“Okay, okay. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to imply you weren’t intelligent.”

“What exactly am I looking at?” he asked, his impatience with her showing.

“Right here.” She leaned in to access the computer, pointing to a paragraph on the page.

Edward was so busy enjoying the delightful scent of her that he’d closed his eyes.

“You’re not going to see it that way,” Susanna said.

“I’m sorry. Your scent is intoxicating.”

“Good to know. I’ll try to avoid using that perfume when you’re around.”

“No. No. That’s a good thing. I’m enjoying it.”

She rolled her eyes at him in an expression he was coming to recognize meant she was annoyed by him.

“Read.”

He looked over the words and much to his horror saw that he was going to die in the not-too-distant future and that it would be at the hand of Domnhall MacCreary. His face became a study in disbelief. “That cannot be true.”

“I’m afraid it is true. My thought, and Addie’s, is that if you know about it, you can avoid it.”

“I can, can’t I?” He was feeling better. MacCreary was a shrewd pirate, but he wasn’t the brightest of men. Edward could surely outsmart him and with the help of Jameson and the men, perhaps the tables could be turned. All he had to do was avoid MacCreary on August 30th and if he couldn’t avoid him, he could at the very least take the man out.

“I think we should rent a car and head to South Carolina.” Susanna sat down opposite him with her own plate of eggs. She took a bite and

sprinkled some salt on the rest.

“Why?” Edward asked.

“Addie wants to see a man about some treasure.”

“Good plan. I’d like to see the same man.”

“I’ll bet you would. You’d better behave yourself though. No stabbing or shooting anyone.” Her tone and pointing finger reminded him of a particularly strict governess.

“I would never.” He feigned being indignant. If the man had treasure and wouldn’t give it up, certain choices might have to be made. Wouldn’t Jameson be thrilled when he returned with the treasure they’d spent months searching for? If he was even able to go back. The thought troubled him. Could he live in this time? “Are there pirates in this time?”

“Not like the pirates of your time,” she said.

“Hmmm...” Troubling news.

“There’s no guarantee this guy has the treasure or if it’s even where he thinks it should be.”

“We’ll see, won’t we?” he raised and lowered his eyebrows as a sly grin appeared on his face.

Susanna was eyeing him with the same expression of annoyance.

He held up his hands in surrender. “I promise. I won’t hurt anyone.” If that was what she needed from him, then he would abide by her wishes.

“Thank you. The last thing we need is to end up in jail.” She pointed to his plate. “Eat your eggs. They’re getting cold.”

He took a bite and then another. Susanna was treating him as if he were a child and she his mother. That wasn’t at all what he’d had in mind. It was unusual for him not to see the light of desire in a woman’s eyes. He wondered why that was and hoped he hadn’t lost his touch.

Susanna was tapping away at her computer. “I’ll text Addie to see when she can come over. I’ll rent a car in the meantime and once she gets here we’ll be on our way.”

“Must she join us?” Edward asked.

“Yes. She’s the one who is going to help us solve this puzzle. Why? Don’t you like her?”

“I like her very much. She seems quite capable. It’s just that I wouldn’t want anything to happen to her.”

“What?” Susanna’s lips were pursed and her brow furrowed in concern.

“If things don’t go well, I mean.”

“Why wouldn’t they go well?” she asked.

“I don’t know.” He’d talked himself into a corner. He didn’t think anything bad was going to happen to any of them, but he was hoping

to be alone with Susanna. How else was he to seduce the woman? Having Addie around was not going to fit with his plans.

Susanna was engrossed in what she was doing. It gave him a moment to appreciate her without her knowing. Her hair looked silky and soft. He wanted to run his fingers through it and give in to the depths of eyes the color of the Caribbean Sea. Her nose was perfectly shaped and her mouth a soft pink bow that puckered up when she was thinking. She glanced up and caught him. He smiled the smile of a guilty man.

"She'll be here in about twenty minutes and I've reserved us a rental. Addie's going to pick it up before coming here. This is going to be an interesting little adventure."

"Adventure should be more than interesting. It should be breathtaking, exhilarating and a great joy!"

"You know for an old guy, you're..."

He didn't allow her to finish. "Old? I am not old. Five and thirty."

"Don't be insulted, but in this time you're more than three hundred years old. You were born in the late seventeenth century and we're in the twenty-first century. Do the math."

Susanna was wearing a devilish grin. She was having fun at his expense. He had to admit she was a clever lass. He would play along.

"Young lady, show some respect for your elders."

She burst into laughter and it was the most delightful sound to his ears, old as they were.

Road trips had always been a favorite part of Susanna's childhood. Her family would all pile in the car and drive for hours, crossing through states from north to south and east to west. Those were memories she held close to her heart. Now that she was a grown woman, her parents weren't as inclined to go on road adventures anymore. She'd called and left a message on their voicemail telling them she was going out of town for a few days and she'd call when she got back. There was no way she was going to tell them what her real plans were. Causing them to worry was the last thing she wanted to do, not that they would believe her.

Susanna's phone buzzed with a text message. She picked it up from the coffee table and saw it was from Addie. *I'm here.*

"Let's go." Susanna grabbed the few things she'd need along with

something from Danielle's room, threw them into her backpack, and headed for the door.

Edward had been lounging around on her sofa mesmerized by the television. "So soon?"

Susanna turned back to find the remote and turned off the TV. "Yes. Don't you want to get back to your own time?" she asked.

"Of course, but I also want to find out about the treasure."

His smile was disarming and Susanna had been doing her best to ignore it, but it hadn't been easy with him flashing it in her direction every time she looked his way. She centered herself with a big inhale, slow exhale and a tip of her head to either side. *Relax*, she told herself. "The treasure's first on the agenda. It's going to be a long ride."

"How many days will it take?" he asked, brushing off his velvety brown jacket and looking up at her with impossibly sexy eyes. It hadn't occurred to her to get him regular clothes, certainly nothing in her closet or Danielle's would have fit him. Perhaps they could find a mall along the way to get lunch and do some shopping. There was no rush, though. He was quite dashing in his pirate clothes.

"About twelve hours, depending on how many stops we make."

"Only twelve hours! This is a truly unbelievable time you live in. I could not imagine riding there in less than a week." Edward hurried past Susanna, bounding down the stairs and then holding out a hand for her when she reached the bottom.

"Aren't you the gentleman, but I don't need any help thank you."

"So we'll be in the Carolinas tonight?" he asked, a touch of wonder in his voice.

"Yes, unless we have car trouble on the way."

Edward held the door to the building open for her to pass through. Susanna appreciated his thoughtfulness and despite her initial wariness of the man, she was coming to see that maybe he wasn't as bad as she'd thought on first meeting him. He certainly wasn't hard to look at.

Susanna glanced up and down the street looking for Addie. A horn beeped and she saw that her friend was double parked behind a bunch of delivery trucks. She jogged off in that direction with Edward hot on her heels.

Once Edward was settled in the backseat, Susanna handed him her backpack before getting in front with Addie. "How much do I owe you for the rental?"

Addie checked and adjusted the rearview mirror, taking a minute to wave to Edward, who chuckled and saluted her. "It's on me. I'll write it off as an expense. I'm going to write an article for the blog." Addie was a writer for a blog, that like her, was all about the unexplained mysteries of the world like UFOs, Big Foot and anything

paranormal. It was the perfect job for her and she excelled at it. "I've got the GPS all set up. We're good to go."

Edward jumped as the voice of the GPS started giving directions. He leaned forward and peeking over Susanna's shoulder eyed the front seat with suspicion. "Where is she?"

The two women laughed before trying to explain GPS to him.

"We navigate by the stars, but this would be..."

"A game changer," Susanna finished for him.

The puzzled expression on his face was one she was becoming quite familiar with. One cocked eyebrow and a twitching jaw muscle were all she needed to see to know he was working his way through whatever new thing he came across and just about everything was new to him. His sandy colored locks and hazel eyes were attractive to her, but this trip wasn't about him. It was about seeing Danielle. Once she knew her friend was well and wanted to stay in Bermuda, Susanna would be heading back to her own time. She wasn't about to start something with Edward just because she liked the look of him. Her heart needed more than that and anything more took time to develop.

The trip was uneventful with stops for bathroom breaks, food and to fill the gas tank.

"I was hoping we could find you some clothes," Susanna said, getting back in the car after their last stop for gas.

"Is there something wrong with my clothing?" Edward asked glancing down at his jacket.

"No. Of course not. It's just that you've had the same clothes on for a few days. I thought you might enjoy something clean."

"I am not dirty," he said, sounding insulted.

"I didn't mean that you were. Clean or not, no one wears clothes like that in this time. We want you to fit in. We can look for something when we're in Charleston."

Susanna looked back in time to hear Edward grumbling something before he pulled his hat down over his eyes, crossed his arms over his chest and settled in for the rest of the ride.

They made it into Charleston at about ten p.m. and got a suite at a very nice hotel on the waterfront. Susanna and Addie estimated that they wouldn't need the room for more than three nights.

"Tomorrow we try to find our treasure hunter," Susanna said once they had set down the bags in the suite.

"It shouldn't be hard. I've got a general idea of where he might be," Addie assured her.

"I'd like to take a look around, if you wouldn't mind," Edward said. He'd been staring out the window since they'd gotten into their room. "It's amazing how much it's changed."

"I forgot you'd have been to Charleston in your own time. I'll bet

it's very different." Susanna's heart went out to him. She couldn't imagine what he must be feeling in this moment.

"You two could walk around in the morning. I'm going to hit the local historical society to see what I can find out about buried treasure." Addie already had her nose buried in her computer.

"Is there a place where a man could get a whisky?" Edward asked.

"The bar downstairs. I'll go with you. I could use a nightcap." Susanna grabbed her purse and headed for the door. "If you need us, Addie, we'll be in the bar. Do you want us to bring anything back for you?"

She didn't look up from her computer, but said, "No. I'll get a soda from the machine, but thanks."

"Shall we?" Susanna asked.

"This is a fascinating thing," Edward said once they were in the elevator and heading down to the lobby.

"I can't imagine how overwhelmed you must feel," Susanna said.

"Why?"

"You know. Everything is so new to you. I've lived with most of this my whole life, but I still can't believe some of the new things that are being developed every day."

The doors to the elevator opened and they walked across the marble floor of the lobby to the bar.

"Do you want to sit at a table or the bar?" she asked.

"Is it possible to sit outside?" Edward asked, eyeing the windows of the room.

"Sure." Susanna led the way to the glass doors that would take them outside. They sat at a table overlooking the harbor. Lights from the buildings and boats sparkled on the water as it gently lapped the shore beneath them.

Edward was running his hands over the table and the chair he sat in. "I like this very much."

"Are you sure you want to go back?" she asked.

"I must," he said.

"Why?" She really didn't know why anyone would want to live in the past. If she found herself in a similar situation she'd definitely want to stay in the place with hot and cold running water, medicine, and all of the many other things that made life in her time so much easier.

"I hope to have news to share with Jameson about the treasure and I must escort you to see Danielle."

"But what if you die on the thirtieth, like it says on the internet?"

He shrugged, "Then I'll be dead."

"That's it? You'll be dead." She couldn't believe that he could be so casual about losing his life. It seemed it bothered her more than it did

him.

“As I’ve said before, now that I know what is to come, I will stay away from MacCreary.”

“And what if you can’t?” She didn’t like the idea that she was delivering him to a time where his days were numbered.

“Then I’ll be...”

“Dead. I know.” She thought it best to change the subject as he’d made it clear he wasn’t changing his mind. “What’s it like being a pirate?”

“Do you really want to know?” He examined her with some skepticism.

“I wouldn’t have asked if I didn’t,” she assured him. She settled into her chair and propped her chin on her hands.

He seemed to think about her question for a few moments before answering. “You might say that I don’t fit in with polite society. I come from a family with money, but in my world that money is only available to the eldest son, which I am not. There is a certain freedom in being a pirate. I don’t have to answer to anyone other than myself and my captain. I can come and go as I please and my hope is to find enough treasure to become a wealthy man who never needs to sail the seas again unless I so choose.”

“The captain of your ship is the man Danielle is with now?”

“Yes. His name is Jameson Mackall and the ship is *The Dagger*. He is a good man and she is safe with him. I believe he will soon give up the life of a pirate for a more safe and secure life with his lady. If he does, then I could be the next captain.”

“I hope he does give it up. I can’t imagine Danielle on board a ship for the rest of her life.” She sipped her drink. “She gets seasick, you know?”

“She did, but Hawes settled all that for her.”

She tipped her head in question. How on earth could someone get over seasickness?

Edward seemed to read her thoughts. “Hawes saw that she wasn’t feeling well and he brewed her his special tea. With time and his help, the sickness passed.”

“So she’s fine on the water now?”

“She is, very much so.”

“Wow! I never would have imagined it was possible.”

“Tell me, Susanna, is there anyone who worries about you?”

“That would be my parents.”

“Anyone else?”

She knew what he was getting at, but she avoided the question by pretending to misunderstand him. “The only one other than Danielle would be Addie. Other than that, I’m on my own.”

“You’ve no man in your life?” He twirled the ice in his glass before lifting his eyes to gaze into hers.

It was a lot harder to avoid direct questions. “No.” She wouldn’t elaborate on her unsuccessful relationships. Especially the last one. Her friend from childhood had been chasing her for years and watching her fall in and out of relationships. He finally wore her down but once she developed feelings deeper than friendship for him, he dumped her. It had been a painful lesson for her to learn and had left her not willing to trust anyone enough to try again. At least not yet.

“You’re a beautiful woman,” he observed.

With all of his attention focused on her, Susanna was becoming uncomfortable.

“Beauty isn’t everything. Men become bored and uninterested, no matter how beautiful a woman is.”

He didn’t argue the point with her so she assumed he knew exactly what she was speaking of. She’d never thought herself to be beautiful, but men were always telling her she was. In reality that wasn’t what mattered and she knew it all too well.

Edward knew better than to say it wasn’t true. In fact he’d ended

many a dalliance for that very reason. Still, he was a romantic at heart and believed that with the right woman there would be no boredom. The problem was finding that woman. He wondered if Susanna could be the one. She was certainly intriguing. Unlike most women he knew she didn’t put him on a pedestal. In fact, she seemed to have little interest in him in that way. She would be a challenge for him and one he was most looking forward to winning.

Susanna sighed deeply as she gazed out over the water and Edward wondered what she might be thinking about.

“You get to see this all the time, don’t you?” she asked.

“I do.”

“It must be nice to not have a care in the world.”

“There are many things to care about.”

She waved his words away, “You know what I mean. You said you have freedom. I wouldn’t mind a little of that.”

“I’m not sure what you mean.”

“Freedom from responsibility. No bills to pay, no one to answer to. I wish I had that.”

This was a side to her that he hadn't seen to this point. He wished he could give her that freedom. "You said you were closing your business when we first met."

"Yes. I can't do it without Danielle. We were a team. Each one of us did the things we were good at so we never had to struggle with stuff we didn't like."

"Can you find someone else to help you?"

"I don't want anyone else. Danielle is...was my business partner and my best friend. I trust her. It's not easy finding someone you can trust completely like that."

"What of Addie?"

Chuckling, she shook her head, "Addie would be a terrible business woman. Don't get me wrong. I love her and she's so incredibly smart, but she's not interested in running a business. It doesn't feed her soul like writing does."

"And what feeds your soul, Susanna?"

"I like to travel. That was the part of our business I loved most. The rest was okay, but being able to pack a bag, hop on a plane, and head somewhere I've never been was everything to me."

He wasn't sure what a *plane* was but didn't want to change the subject. "You can't do that without Danielle?"

"I can, but until I figure out a new business plan I can't afford it." She shrugged her shoulders and looked out over the water. "You're lucky that way. You get to travel and have adventures whenever you want."

"We're on an adventure now, aren't we?"

"I guess we are."

"Shall we enjoy it?" He held up his whisky.

"Yes." She clinked her glass with his.

Edward smiled. Not the smile that melted hearts, but a genuine smile meant only for Susanna.

"I like you," Susanna said.

"You sound surprised."

"I am. I didn't feel like I had any room in my heart for new people, but you've proved me wrong."

"I'm happy to hear it. I like you, too."

Her lips lifted in a smile that hit him in the gut. It was unexpected, but not unwelcome. He vowed to do whatever he could to keep her smiling at him exactly in that way whenever possible. He thought about his friend Jameson and his love for Danielle. He would never have expected Jameson to fall in love, but then love was like that. It came at you from out of nowhere and if you were lucky it stayed. He would tread carefully and see where it would lead him.

Chapter 5

Bright and early the next morning, Susanna, Edward and Addie stood in the lobby of their hotel making their plans for the day. Susanna had picked up brochures from the concierge desk to help guide them through the city and Addie had her nose in her phone in search of the local historical society.

“Addie, are you sure we can’t help you with your research?” Susanna asked. “I feel guilty sightseeing while you’re working.”

“I’m not going to deprive Edward of his chance to see Charleston as it is today and it wouldn’t be a good idea to send him off on his own.”

“Do you want to come with us?” Susanna asked.

“No. I’m excited to find out about this treasure. If I went with you, that’s all I’d be thinking about. You go and enjoy your day. Maybe Edward will come across something that will jog his memory and help us figure out the time travel.”

“We’ll meet back here later,” Susanna said.

Addie put her phone down and gave Susanna her full attention. “I know exactly where I’m going. I’ll dive into any information I can find about the treasure. I don’t know how long it will take me, so you two should probably have dinner without me. I’ll pick up something quick if I get hungry.”

“We’ll see you back at the room then,” Susanna turned to Edward. “You ready for this?”

“I can hardly wait.” He wore a wide grin as he hurried her through the doors.

“Maybe we can find you some clothes while we’re out.”

“Perhaps, but I don’t believe it’s necessary.”

“We’ll have to agree to disagree on that one,” she giggled.

Once outside they turned right and walked along the waterfront. Susanna breathed in the scent of the sea and felt the heat of the sun. It was going to be quite warm today. She’d planned for it. Wearing blue jean shorts and a tank top, she noted that Edward kept sneaking looks at her every chance he got. It was helpful to remember that where he came from, dressing in these clothes would be quite improper. To

keep her hands free she'd put her money, credit card and ID in a small wallet she placed in her front pocket. Her phone was safely tucked away in one of her back pockets for easy access.

"Tell me about the treasure," Susanna said as she eyed a seagull that was walking along beside them looking very much like he was interested in their conversation.

"There's not much to tell. There are two maps. One is the supposed map to Christopher Plumb's treasure and the other was in Domnhaill MacCreary's possession until Danielle stole it from him."

"Wait! What? Danielle stole a treasure map? I can't believe it." Susanna couldn't remember a time when Danielle hadn't been all about doing the right thing, no matter the consequences.

Edward laughed. "She's quite the resourceful woman and although she did anger MacCreary, she gained the respect of the men aboard *The Dagger*."

"Isn't MacCreary the guy who's going to kill you?" she asked.

"The very same." There wasn't even a note of concern in his voice.

"Slow down." Susanna grabbed Edward by the arm and turned him to face her.

"Does he pose any danger to Danielle?"

"I don't believe so. Jameson will protect her. You can be assured of that."

This new information was unsettling. Susanna had to find a way to get to Danielle and once there get her to come back to the safety of the twenty-first century.

As they walked, Edward would stop occasionally to examine a

boat. He noted all of the differences between these boats and those of his time. Out in the harbor, ships came and went with nary a breeze to propel them. It was truly amazing. He couldn't wait to share this knowledge with Jameson. Docked at a pier off in the distance a ship caught Edward's eye. The curve of its prow, the height of its masts reaching up above the smaller ships around it, and the general appearance as it sat bobbing gently at its moorings were very familiar.

Susanna saw it, too, and pointed to it. "Look, a replica of a pirate ship."

Edward picked up his pace heading directly for it.

Susanna kept up with him as he began to run. "What's the hurry?"

"I don't believe it," he shouted. "It's *The Dagger*."

"Isn't that your ship?" Her words came out clipped and breathless.

Edward reached the gangplank before her. There was no doubt this ship was called *The Dagger*. Its name was emblazoned across the bow. There was also no doubt that it *was* *The Dagger*.

"I don't believe it. How did it get here?" he asked. The ship looked very much the same as it had the last time he'd seen it. Of course, the sails had been replaced and the ship itself had been painted.

"It has to be a replica," Susanna said.

"No. This is my ship," he insisted as he rubbed his brow and scanned the deck above.

"We can go aboard. We just have to buy tickets over there." Susanna grabbed him by the arm and led him away to the booth. "Two please."

She was handed two pieces of paper, but Edward wasn't concerned with that. He began to walk away, back towards *The Dagger*.

"Hey, wait for me." He heard, rather than saw Susanna as she ran to catch him. She took hold of his arm once again.

Her touch brought him back to the present as he closed his hand over hers and slowed his pace. He knew it wouldn't be good to draw attention to himself. "I'm sorry, Susanna. Forgive me, please."

"Nothing to forgive. I can't imagine what you must be feeling right now, but we have to be careful."

"I understand." He reigned in his excitement on seeing the ship by taking a deep breath before continuing at a more leisurely pace.

They boarded the ship. Susanna handed the tickets to a man dressed as a pirate. He wondered who this man was who dared pretend he belonged aboard the ship Edward called home. He looked no more like a pirate than Susanna did.

"Ahoy, mateys," the man said. "Welcome aboard *The Dagger*."

"Is this a real pirate ship or a replica?" Susanna asked.

Edward knew the answer to that question before she'd even asked. This was *his* ship. He knew every detail of it like the back of his hand. Some of the boards had been replaced, but he noted those that were not, still wore signs of the many battles she'd been through. A bullet hole in the galley door was obvious, but only to those who knew where to look.

"It is the real thing, miss. Take your time. Explore as much as you like." He extended a welcoming arm across the deck as they walked past.

"Thank you," Susanna said.

"Sir, I'm impressed with your attire," he said as Edward stopped to look around.

"He's into cosplay," Susanna explained. "Takes it very seriously."

Edward opened his mouth to speak, but felt Susanna tugging on his arm and leading him away. "Remember, don't draw attention to yourself."

"I promise I won't, but what is this cosplay?" So many new things to learn about in this time.

"Hmmm...how to explain it. Some people really enjoy dressing up in costume," she explained.

"Like pirates?" he looked down at his clothing.

"Exactly!"

"That young lad," he pointed back to the man who'd greeted them when they boarded. "Cosplay?"

"No. It's his job to look like a pirate."

"Pirates don't look like that," Edward stated. "They don't wear ridiculous striped shirts or ripped breeches. And why does he have a dead parrot attached to his shoulder?"

"Part of the costume. And it's not a dead parrot. It's a toy."

"Hmmm..." Edward had no idea what to say about that. He was disappointed that people of this time didn't truly understand the pirates of his day.

"Where to first?" Susanna asked.

"Jameson's quarters."

Susanna followed him as he moved purposefully towards the quarter deck. He held out his hand to guide her up the steps and this time she surprised him by taking it. He wrestled with the emotions assailing him. This was *his* ship and he was proud of it. The sense of ownership he felt overwhelmed him. His instinct was to send the imitators overboard and take command of her. He wanted to sail her back to Bermuda, but knew it was fruitless. This may be his ship, but it wasn't his time. Still, he knew where he was and was quite comfortable and proud leading Susanna as they mounted the steps. Once they were on the quarter deck, Edward turned and surveyed the ship as he had done almost daily for as long as he could remember.

"Edward, is this really *The Dagger*?"

"This is *The Dagger*. I've no doubt."

"It's amazing she lasted three hundred years. They must have done some major restoration to keep her in such good shape."

Edward turned to the door of the captain's quarters and opened it for Susanna. "This is where Jameson captains the ship." Edward hopped over the odd velvet rope blocking his path to Jameson's desk.

Susanna gasped and looked behind her. "Edward, you're not supposed to go back there. That's what the ropes are for."

"This is Jameson's desk!" He touched it and examined the papers and map sitting atop it.

"His actual desk?" Susanna asked.

“Yes, though I don’t recognize the maps or letters.” It was obvious to him that they weren’t authentic.

“Wow!” She looked behind her once again, seeming nervous.

“What worries you?” he asked.

They were the only two on the ship other than the so-called crew. “If they find you back there, they’ll kick us off.”

“This is my ship!” he stated with conviction. “I’ll hear them if they come. The boards outside the cabin creak when someone is there.”

“Keep your voice down. I *know* this is your ship, but in this time it isn’t.”

Edward understood what she was saying. He had to be careful. He took a final look at the desk, then opened the drawers and began searching through them.

“What are you looking for?” Susanna asked.

“The stone. It’s not here.”

“That would have made everything easier,” she noted. “Danielle has been here, hasn’t she?” She stepped over the rope, joining Edward. He read the sadness in her eyes as they scanned the shelves filled with books. “Do you think she’s read any of these books?” Her hand caressed the binding of a large leather-bound tome.

Edward shrugged his shoulders.

“They look like new editions, so probably not. It’s so weird to think that Danielle has probably stood in this exact spot.” She glanced at Edward.

His heart ached for what Susanna must be feeling and he couldn’t stop himself from caressing her cheek and brushing away a single tear that threatened to drop for the friend she might never see again.

He wanted to pull her into his arms and console her. It seemed she wanted the same as she inched closer and placed her hand on his chest.

Interrupted by a noise outside, they hopped over the rope and went back out, just as one of the crew was heading up the stairs.

“I was just coming to see if you had any questions,” the young man said.

Susanna poked Edward in the back as he was about to speak.

“No questions,” Edward said. He headed down the stairs and across the deck to the gangplank.

“D on’t you want to look at anything else?” Susanna couldn’t

help but notice the shift in his demeanor. Since she’d met him he’d always seemed unconcerned about his situation, as if nothing ever bothered him, but it was obvious *this* had.

“No need.”

“Are you sure?” She was surprised that he was in such a hurry to leave.

“Very.” His answer was terse, leaving no room for argument.

Susanna grabbed one of the brochures at the bottom of the gangplank. She’d take a look at it later. Maybe it would have some useful information for Edward and Jameson Mackall that would tell them about their future.

She peeked at Edward without him knowing and was overcome with sadness. Sadness that he was obviously missing home and sadness that he might be dead in a short time. “Hey,” she said, tugging on his sleeve.

He stopped and looked at her. His eyes, which always seemed bright with amusement, now sorrowfully searched her face.

“Let’s get some ice cream. That always cheers me up. I’m guessing it might do the same for you.” She pointed to a small shop on the boardwalk. “I’m pretty sure you’ve never had this before, so I’m excited to see what you think.”

“I’m sorry to disappoint you, but I have had ice cream.” The smirk she’d found annoying before was back and she couldn’t be happier.

“Really? I don’t believe it.”

“I have,” he assured her.

“Well, it couldn’t be anything like today’s ice cream.”

They reached the shop where Susanna ordered her favorite, mint chocolate chip. Edward stared at the chalk board that listed the day’s flavors.

“What flavors do you like?” Susanna asked, as the woman behind the counter handed her a scoop in a large cone.

“You can taste whatever you like,” the woman said, waiting for him to decide.

“Choose for me,” Edward said, surprising Susanna.

She eyed him for a minute before saying, “Mocha fudge. I think you’ll like that.”

The woman handed him the cone. Susanna paid her and they left. They sat on a bench just outside the shop door. Edward watched Susanna enjoying her ice cream for a moment before tasting his own.

"What do you think? Do you like it?" she asked.

"I do. It's very good."

They sat there watching the boats coming and going until their ice cream was gone. "Where to next?" Susanna asked.

Edward stood and waited for Susanna to join him. She placed her hand in the crook of his elbow. She knew it was out of character for her, but it felt right to walk with him this way as they left the waterfront. He seemed to be searching for things that were familiar to him. Whenever he would find something, he would point it out to her. "There was an inn here on this corner," he stopped as if getting his bearings. "Yes. It was here."

"Jameson and I came to a gala here in Charleston with Danielle. We stayed at this inn."

"Oooh! Tell me more. I'll bet Danielle enjoyed it. She always loved a good party." She gazed up at Edward who was smiling down at her.

"Not this one. It's the night she was kidnapped by Domnhall MacCreary." He paused for a moment before continuing. "The first time."

Susanna came to a complete stop, forcing Edward to do the same. "Kidnapped! More than once! You didn't tell me she was kidnapped." She playfully slapped at his arm, causing him to chuckle.

"I'm telling you now. All you need to know is that it ended well. Your Danielle is more like a pirate than you would imagine."

"I can't even," Susanna said. Maybe Danielle wasn't safe after all. "I thought you said she was safe."

"She is."

"Then how did she get kidnapped?" She had to hear the whole story and she wanted to hear it now.

"Any trouble Danielle found herself in was of her own doing. If she had waited for Jameson as he requested it would have never happened."

Susanna was feeling defensive for her friend. "Danielle is very responsible. She would never put herself in danger like that."

"Perhaps she wasn't thinking about danger until it was too late," he pointed out.

"I don't like the sound of that." How could she have put herself in a predicament like that? Wasn't she always the one who was telling Susanna she needed to be more careful?

"Don't worry. I'm sure it won't happen again." The humorous glint in his eye told her he thought her concerns were amusing.

Susanna yanked her arm free from his elbow. "You're right it won't. I'm bringing her back home with me if I ever get to see her again."

Edward chuckled. "I believe Jameson might have something to say

about that.”

“I’m serious. He should have taken better care of my friend.”

It seemed it was Edward’s turn to be defensive of his friend. “He did. He saved her. Not once, or even twice, but three times.”

“Are you kidding me?” She couldn’t believe her ears.

“Don’t be angry. When you see her you’ll understand.”

Susanna got her emotions under control. She shouldn’t be angry with Edward. None of this was his fault. They’d been having a nice time together and she was determined to continue doing so.

They walked down historic King Street stopping to browse in the beautiful shops. Susanna read something that morning in one of her brochures that said Charleston had been a port city in the seventeenth century known as Charles Town.

As they continued walking, they passed the stately Georgian homes of Rainbow Row, a street aptly named because of the colorful pink, green and yellow houses. Not only were they colorful, but the architecture was beautiful as well. “Did this street exist in your time?”

“It did, but I never spent much time in this section of town.”

“Where *did* you spend your time?” she asked.

“In places where pirates were welcomed.” He didn’t share more with her, even though she waited.

Susanna wanted to ask him more, but she could tell he wasn’t interested in sharing that part of his life with her. “I hope Addie is having some luck figuring this all out.”

“She seems to be a smart one. I’m sure she will.”

“When we get back I’m going to book us passage on a boat headed to Bermuda. I don’t know how we’ll get you on board, but we’ll figure something out.”

He threw his hands up in the air and tipping his head to the side with a knowing smirk, said, “You can leave that up to me.”

Susanna couldn’t help but laugh. He really was pretty cute and he knew it. As a pirate, he was also sure to be crafty. “We should get back to the hotel.”

“Will we have supper?” Edward asked.

“Are you getting hungry?”

“Where shall we eat?”

“The hotel has a restaurant that’s supposed to be good. We could eat there,” she suggested.

“I’ve a better thought. There was a tavern near here that I remember. If it’s still there, that is where we’ll eat.”

“If that’s what you want, let’s see if we can find it.” She hadn’t expected to see *The Dagger* in the harbor, so it wouldn’t surprise her to find this tavern he was talking about.

They wandered up and down streets and alleys until they came to

a two-story stone building with a sign that read The Charles Town Tavern.

"This is it! I can't believe it's still standing." The delighted expression on his face warmed her heart.

"Let's go in."

Edward opened the door to a candlelit room with stone walls and cozy booths set around the outer edges of the tavern. "These are different," he said.

A woman came up to them carrying two menus. "For two?"

"Yes. Can we get a booth, please?" Susanna asked.

"Right this way."

They followed her to a booth tucked away in the back of the room.

"Someone will be with you shortly."

"Thanks," Susanna said.

She scooted into the booth and was met from the other side with Edward. His leg touched hers under the table and she surprised herself by not moving it away. "This is nice. Is it like you remember it?"

"Somewhat?" He gazed out over the room. "There were tables here and the furnishings seem new to me. The structure itself is very much the same." Edward turned back to Susanna with a wistful smile. "When *The Dagger* is docked in the harbor, the crew comes here. We've had many a raucous night of drinking, gambling, and..." He went silent as he lifted the glass of water that had been placed in front of him to his lips.

Susanna wondered why he stopped. She was enjoying his storytelling. He made it all sound so exciting. Over the course of the day he'd told her about battles at sea, sword fights and always the crew. Each time he spoke of them, his voice became a little sad. It occurred to her that she couldn't imagine leaving all the people she knew behind. She tried to imagine she was in the year 1724. What would it have been like to sit here with Edward? "Were women welcome here in your time?"

He thought about it for a moment. "Only the women who worked here."

"So women weren't allowed in taverns?" she asked.

"I wouldn't say they weren't allowed. It wouldn't be a place they would wish to be."

"Hmmm...so they could be here, but only if they were here for the men." She had to remember that they were talking about the eighteenth century.

"You disapprove?"

"Not of the women. They were doing what they had to do to get by. I'm not judging them."

He tipped his head, a serious scowl appearing as his forehead

wrinkled. "Are you judging me then?"

"Of course not. All I'm saying is that I know it was customary in that time for women to have their place in society, but in my time I can go where I want when I want," she explained.

Edward's face relaxed. "And you enjoy that."

"I do. I can't imagine not being able to come in here with you, unless I was working here," she teased.

He smiled that charming smile of his. "I can't imagine it either. I wish to have you here with me."

"I don't know what it was like three hundred years ago, but it's kind of romantic with all the candlelight." She hadn't moved her leg away. There was something intimate happening between them that she hadn't expected.

"It would be dark without it," Edward noted, apparently missing her meaning.

Susanna hid her disappointment as best as possible. "I'm sure they have electric lights too."

"In my time, candles were the only way to light a room. They were not romantic, as you say."

Ah, he did get it. "That's too bad. Maybe if you'd let some women in you might find they thought it was romantic." A quick flick of her hair and a sassy smile got her message across.

He quickly tipped his head conceding to her point.

They ordered their food and when it arrived, Edward seemed to relish every bite. Susanna thought the food was very good for a small, out of the way tavern. They shared a bottle of wine and enjoyed each other's company.

Edward wasn't the guy she thought he was when she'd first met him. He was thoughtful, intelligent and a very good listener. Unlike her experiences with most men she'd known, he wasn't telling her what to do and how to do it. He allowed her to speak her mind and saved his opinion until she requested it. He was full of the qualities she would like in a man. It was a shame he was determined to return to his own time, because she was enjoying her time with him more and more.

The lobby of the hotel was quiet when they finally returned.

After their meal they'd strolled along the waterfront, enjoying the cool

of the evening and the soft ocean breeze. Edward was enjoying himself immensely. Susanna was continuing to tuck her hand into the crook of his elbow as they strolled along. He was sad that their time alone was coming to an end. He'd discovered that Susanna wasn't a woman of his time and he found that enticing. She was a problem solver and so much more independent than any woman he'd ever known. He decided she would be great fun to have along for adventures and wondered if he should convince her to stay in his time, if he was ever able to return.

"Addie's probably waiting for us upstairs. I wonder what she was able to find out?" Susanna let go of his arm as they walked through the lobby.

"I'm curious myself," Edward said as they awaited the elevator. He missed the closeness of her body pressed close to his as it had been while they walked.

"There you are!" Addie's voice came from behind them. "I've been in the bar. You won't believe what I found!"

"Tell us," Susanna said as she rushed to Addie, leaving Edward staring after her.

He was about to join them, but they were headed back to him. Addie's arms were filled with papers, books and the thing she called her computer.

"Upstairs. I can't sit in there any longer without buying more drinks. I feel guilty."

They took the elevator up to the room and once inside, Addie set her computer on the table and opened it.

"Treasure or time travel?" Susanna asked.

"Treasure. You aren't going to believe this," she said.

"Out with it Addie, you're killing me." Susanna sat on the edge of the bed closest to the table peering over Addie's shoulder. Edward sat opposite them curious to hear what she had to say.

Addie was bubbling with excitement. "The treasure hunter...his name is Christopher Plumb. He's a direct descendent of the pirate Christopher Plumb. He has a map that was handed down through his family, so it just has to be accurate, wouldn't you think?"

Edward appeared stunned by this news. "Christopher Plumb had children? I had no idea."

"Apparently he did. Didn't you know him?" Addie asked.

"I never had the chance to meet him, but I've heard many tales of his exploits. He was a good and fair man by all accounts."

"I've contacted our treasure hunter and because I was so interested in the history and his ancestor, he invited us to visit with him tomorrow."

"That is good news," Edward said. "Did he tell you anything else?"

"No. He said he'd fill me in on his efforts when he sees us tomorrow."

"Where exactly are we going?" Susanna asked.

"He pinned his location for us, which is the only way we'd probably be able to find him. It's pretty far off the beaten path."

"It must be where he's searching for the treasure," Susanna said.

"How easy would it be to take it from him?" Edward asked in all seriousness.

The women were looking daggers at him. He'd said something unseemly. "I am a pirate. You know that." He glanced from one woman to the other as they still continued staring at him like two evil hellions.

"We do." Susanna answered for them both. "I don't think that's a great idea though."

"What is then?" he asked

"We figure out where the treasure is, then you go back to your own time, don't get killed and you find it then. Simple, no?"

"We don't even know if he's found anything." Addie closed her computer and faced them.

"True." Susanna said. "Which could mean somebody else already found it." She gazed at Edward. "Maybe you."

"Perhaps." He walked to the window and, moving the gauzy curtains aside, stared out into the darkness.

"We should get some rest, but first, Addie can I use your computer? I'm going to try to find us a boat to Bermuda."

Edward bid the women good night. So many thoughts rushed through his head. Many of them were about treasure and almost all of them were about Susanna.

Chapter 6

Addie took the keys from the hotel valet and got in the car while Susanna tipped the man. Edward got in the back seat, still voicing his amazement at the woman who told them where to go. Addie drove, following the GPS, which led them down a dirt road that was overgrown with cherry laurels, wax myrtles, holly, oaks and long leaf pines. There was just enough room for the car to pass, but as they went further down the road it became an impassable tangle of branches and fallen trees.

"We're going to have to walk from here," Susanna said, exiting the vehicle.

"Yeah. I don't think the rental agency would like it if we dinged up the car," Addie said, joining Susanna.

Edward followed suit and all three of them stood there staring at Susanna's phone. Her GPS said they were close and switching it from driving to walking, they followed where it led.

"Are there poisonous snakes in here?" Susanna asked, not taking her eyes off the long grasses around her.

"According to my research last night there are three different types of rattlesnakes, as well as copperheads, cottonmouths and coral snakes."

Susanna shivered at the thought. "Thanks for being so thorough."

Edward looked down at Susanna's sandals. "Not the correct shoe for this type of trek."

"What would you suggest?" she asked with a bit of sarcasm in her voice.

"Boots." He pointed down to his feet. Perhaps a taller version of the ones Addie has on."

"This is terrible. I'm scared I'm going to step on a snake hidden in the leaves on the ground." She gingerly took a step or two before stopping and examining the ground again.

"I could carry you," Edward offered.

"No. No. I can do this." She took another two steps forward and froze. "Okay. Maybe I can't. I hate snakes."

Edward hoisted her up on his back. "Hold on and watch out for

branches.”

Susanna wrapped her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist. She was embarrassed, but not enough to have him put her down.

Addie was giggling and tried to cover it with a hand over her mouth.

“Not much further,” Susanna said, checking her phone one more time and sending an irritated look Addie’s way.

Pushing through the trees, they came to a clearing where a tent had been set up. The sound of water flowing nearby told them they were near a river or stream.

“Good morning,” Christopher Plumb was seated at a portable table with a map laid out in front of him.

“Good morning,” Edward said, putting Susanna down on the ground.

“Snakes?” Plumb asked.

“Yes,” Susanna said. “I’m Susanna Cole, this is Addie Michaels and Edward Sutherland.”

He stood and approached them with an outstretched hand, which they each shook in turn. He was probably in his early fifties and about six feet tall. Dark hair, welcoming brown eyes and a wide grin let them know he truly was happy to see them. He was fit and more than capable of being out in the wilderness like this, although Susanna couldn’t understand why anyone would want to be. “I understand you are curious about the treasure my many times great-grandfather buried.”

“Yes. We were wondering if you’d made any progress and why no one else in your family had searched before you.” Susanna scooted closer to Edward as she once again scanned the area around her for snakes.

“I’ve not found anything to this point, but I believe I know exactly where it is buried. No one in the family searched for it before me because I just found the map tucked into a pocket of an old trunk in the attic of my family home. To be honest, they all think I’m wasting my time. I love history and to me there’s nothing more exciting than the history of my own family. So I’ve been researching for years, picking up little tidbits of information here and there. The map was the icing on the cake.”

“Wow! That must have been an exciting find,” Susanna said.

“It was, but it has been a lot of work locating it and now I’ve got a lot of digging to do,” Christopher explained.

“Thanks so much for trusting us out here. I mean, you don’t know us and I imagine there are people who would try to steal it from you once you find it.” Susanna snuck a peek at Edward hoping he wasn’t

making any plans she was unaware of.

"I'm not worried about it. After speaking with Addie last night, I understood why it was so important for you to meet with me." A fatherly smile appeared as he glanced at Addie.

"You did?" Susanna asked.

"Yes. She told me about Mr. Sutherland and I was curious to meet him."

"You are?" Susanna stole a peek in Addie's direction.

"I told him everything," Addie admitted.

"So you know about the time travel?" Susanna couldn't believe their luck. They'd found a man who accepted time travel, pirates and who was on a treasure hunt.

"I do. Like Addie, I'm a believer in what other's find unbelievable." He turned to Edward. "Last night I took some time to read up on you. Did you know the original Christopher Plumb?"

Edward cleared his throat. "I never met him, but every pirate of my time has aspired to be like him. He was not only a respected captain, but he was generous with his knowledge, his time and his wealth. Truth be told, from the moment we heard of his death, we've all been trying to find his treasure. They say it was taken from a Spanish galleon on a return voyage to Spain laden with gold and jewels. I've also been told that he found a token of good luck."

"What might that be?" Christopher asked.

"A golden hook," Edward said.

"Why would that be good luck?" Christopher looked around at the group.

"He fishes well who uses a golden hook," Addie said. "It's an old Latin proverb."

"You're a wealth of information, young lady. Thank you for your knowledge."

Addie blushed at this. "I've got a head full of useless information, but occasionally it comes in handy."

Christopher chuckled at this. "As for the treasure, it would be amazing to find it, but if it's not here, then it means that you or one of your brethren found it."

"Possibly," Edward said.

"What do you mean?" Susanna asked.

"I mean that pirates are very protective of their treasures. So much so that some create maps that would lead those searching in the wrong direction. So any treasure may have two, three or even four maps associated with it."

"I didn't know that," Susanna said.

"It's a well-kept secret," Edward replied.

"Do you think this map is one of the fakes then?" Plumb asked.

"May I see it?" Edward asked.

"Of course. He led them to his table where the map was laid out, anchored by rocks and a phone."

Edward examined it. "It would be hard for me to say whether this was the *true* map. The fact that you found it in your family home suggests that it could be. It looks very similar to the one we had on *The Dagger*, so it is possible they are both accurate. It's also possible that the map on *The Dagger* is a fake."

"My thought as well. Let me show you where I'm about to start digging. If you like you can help me." He smiled, knowing they would.

He led the way through more brush, to the base of an oak tree. "The map indicates an oak surrounded by three large boulders and two longleaf pines. This is the only place it could be."

Susanna glanced around the area and noted all of the telltale signs Christopher Plumb had shown on his map. "This has to be it."

"I would agree," Edward said. "Do you have something to dig with?"

Christopher walked around behind the oak and came back with two shovels, handing one to Edward. "If I'm right, we should dig here. He made an x on the ground in front of him."

"How fortuitous that you should be starting your dig today," Edward said, pushing the shovel into the ground with his boot.

"It was meant to be." Christopher winked at him and began digging as well.

As there were only two shovels, Susanna and Addie stood and watched. Susanna kept her eyes open for snakes and Addie picked up a metal detector she found leaning against a nearby tree. "Do you mind if I search through the dirt you're setting aside?"

"Not at all. I'd be grateful." Christopher wiped his brow with a handkerchief he pulled from his pocket.

Edward removed his jacket and handed it to Susanna. It was hot and so was Edward. Watching him dig took her mind off of snakes as his muscles rippled beneath his white shirt, now covered in sweat.

As each shovelful of dirt hit the ground, Addie waved the metal detector over it. Finally after several passes, the detector let out a loud and insistent beep. Everyone stopped as she searched through the last pile of dirt and came up with an old silver coin. She held it out to Christopher, who looked it over. A huge smile appeared on his lips. "This is definitely from that period. Looks to be Spanish."

"Hopefully there's more where that came from," Susanna said. "How much further down do you think it could be?"

Edward continued shoveling. Susanna handed him a water from her backpack.

"Thank you." He gulped it down without stopping.

"Would you like one, Christopher?"

"Yes, please." It was clear he was exhausted as he leaned heavily on his shovel. He nodded his head in Edward's direction. "He's a strong one."

"I'd say so," Susanna agreed, eyeing Edward. She took the empty bottle from him. "Are you okay?"

"Fine," Edward assured her with a smile.

After what seemed like several more hours of digging and Addie's finding a few more coins, they gave up.

"You must be exhausted," Susanna said.

"It is tiring work, but I love the history of it all and the connection I feel to my ancestor while I'm out here. I can't help but think he'd be pleased to know I was searching."

"I think you're right." Susanna felt a connection to Christopher. He reminded her of her adventure loving Uncle Peter who'd passed away when she was in high school.

"I don't think I'm going to find anything else today," Christopher said. "Would you be able to help me tomorrow as well?"

"I'm afraid not," Susanna said. "We've booked a ride on a ship headed to Bermuda. We're going to try to do some time traveling if we can."

"Well, if you get back there and hear anything about my treasure I hope you'll let me know."

"Definitely," she promised.

They walked back to Christopher's camp.

"I'll try a different spot tomorrow. It would be easy to be digging just a few inches or feet from the treasure."

"Good luck," Addie said.

Susanna was still holding Edward's jacket. "Can I get a ride back out of here?"

"Of course." He squatted down so it was easier for her to climb on his back.

Edward was a most enjoyable mode of transportation. "Thank you. I might have had to stay here with Christopher if it wasn't for you."

He chuckled. "I hope your search is fruitful, sir."

"Thank you," Christopher said. "Good bye and good luck to you all."

They waved goodbye and made their way back to the car.

"I don't know about anyone else, but I'm starving," Addie said, rubbing her stomach.

"I think we all are," Susanna said.

They got in the car and headed to the nearest gas station where they filled the tank and bought snacks. Edward was mesmerized by the mini mart and had many questions for Susanna.

He held up a yellow bag. "What is this?"

"Potato chips. Get it, you'll like them."

"And this." He held up a candy bar.

"Candy."

He moved on to the next aisle and picked up a few more items, which he showed Susanna. She nodded her approval.

"I'll grab some drinks."

"Just water for me," Addie said.

They plunked their purchases down on the counter where the clerk rang them up. Susanna paid for everything and they headed back to the car where she distributed the snacks. She couldn't help thinking how her mother had done the exact same thing on their many road trips when she was a little girl. It brought back happy memories.

Edward was having a wonderful time. He couldn't remember the last time he'd enjoyed himself this much. Susanna and Addie were good company and as far as adventures went, this one was by far the best he'd had.

He crunched on the potato chips and with each one he ate said, "These are amazing!"

After about the fourth time, Susanna and Addie stopped him before he could say it. "Yes, we know. They are amazing."

"I'm sorry for my enthusiasm. I only hope I can find something like them in my own time." He stared into the faces of two women who obviously had tired of hearing his continued exclamations of delight.

"I'll tell you what. If you quietly finish the bag, when we get to your time we'll find the ingredients and I'll show you how to make them." Susanna smiled what seemed half indulgence and half grimace.

"Agreed."

They pulled up to the hotel and the valet took the keys from them. It had been a long day and Edward was quite tired.

"I just want to lie down," Susanna said as they passed through the lobby.

"Me, too," Addie said.

"I did all the work out there," Edward reminded them.

"You did and you looked good doing it, too," Susanna teased.

"You flatter me," Edward said, unsure of whether she truly meant it.

“And you enjoy it,” she replied.

Addie had her nose in her phone as they rode the elevator up to their room. Once in the room, she eyed the both of them. “I’m going to bed. See you in the morning.”

She went into the bedroom of their suite, leaving them alone.

Edward opened the sliding door that led onto the balcony overlooking the waterfront. A cool breeze fluttered the gauzy curtains as he passed through and sat down with his feet propped on the railing. Susanna joined him, which pleased him immensely. Something was brewing between them, but he instinctively knew that he would need to take it slow. She wasn’t like the women he usually spent time with. Those women were fun and good to bed, but Susanna was different. She was not only a beauty, but also strong-willed, a woman of business, intelligent and bold. In other words, unlike any women he knew other than Lady Charlotte and Danielle. It was clear to him that women of this time were quite capable of doing anything they wished. Perhaps women of his own time were as well, but they were not allowed the luxury.

“It’s a beautiful night.” Susanna sat down next to him and gazed out at the water. “I love the way the lights from the buildings twinkle on the ocean. They look like hundreds of sparkling diamonds.”

“It is a sight to see. And to know that in the future, from my time of course, this is possible - it’s almost too hard to believe.”

“Everything is new to you. You don’t know anything about anything.” Susanna laughed, but quickly stopped once she seemed to believe she’d hurt Edward’s feelings. “I’m sorry. I wasn’t trying to insult you. I’m sure there are lots of things you know about. What I meant was that in this time you know less than you did in your own time.”

Edward’s scowl wasn’t moved by her statement. He was an intelligent man. Given time in this place he would know everything he needed to know and perhaps more.

“I think I’m making things worse.” She reached out a hand to touch his arm.

Under normal circumstances, Edward would have taken advantage of her hand touching him. It would have been a sign he would not allow to pass, but Susanna wasn’t that woman. She wouldn’t want him to take advantage of the situation. And so, he remained silent, doing his best to ignore the heat penetrating through his sleeve.

“Are you mad at me?” she asked.

“I’m not angry,” he said, hoping she knew he meant it.

“You sure seem like you are.”

“Not at all. I was feeling out of place and what you said made me realize I don’t belong here.” He belonged aboard *The Dagger* out on the

open sea.

"But what if we can't get you back to your own time? You'll have to stay. You'll be forced to belong here."

"I have faith that we'll find a way back. Then we'll see who doesn't know anything about anything, as you say." He smiled warmly, letting her know it was all right.

"Touché," she said, smiling back at him.

She hadn't moved her hand. "Would you care to move closer?" he asked after a few moments.

Susanna moved her chair right next to his and Edward placed his arm around her shoulders. "Do you mind my arm around you?" He had never in his life felt the need to ask a woman's permission, but sensed that in this time it would be appropriate to do.

"Not at all. I like it." She gazed up at him. Her eyes were a sapphire blue in the dim light of the balcony. He tipped her chin up with a single finger. "May I?"

Her answer was to meet his lips with hers in a smoldering kiss. Edward had kissed many a young woman before, but something about this kiss reached deep down to his soul. She turned more fully in her chair, reaching her hands up to caress his face and tangle her fingers in his hair before kissing him again. There it was a second time. The feeling that this was more than just a kiss. It was more than desire driving him to kiss her back with all the emotion of the moment.

When their lips parted, Susanna didn't move away. She stayed right where she was, tucking a lock of his hair behind his ears and examining every inch of his face. "You are a beautiful man. I'm sure you know that."

"I've never been called beautiful before. This is a first." He was pleased she found him beautiful, as she'd put it.

"Well, you are. I don't know what it is about you that draws me to you."

"Danielle said I would like you. At first I wasn't sure she was right, but the more I get to know you, the more I believe she knew exactly what she was speaking of."

"Right? I thought you were an ass when you walked into my office. You're not though. You're everything a man should be in my opinion. Smart, funny, strong."

"Is that all?"

"And somewhat of an egotist," she laughed.

"I do know that about myself," he laughed right along with her.

"It's getting late. We should get some sleep. We've got to be down at the docks early tomorrow." She stood facing him.

"Good night, then. I'll sit here a while longer if you don't mind. I've some thinking to do."

He reluctantly watched as she walked back inside giving him a small wave as she did. Her kiss was seared into his memory. It was something he would never forget. If only she would stay in his time, but it was hard to imagine Susanna would be inclined to do so. Edward was unsure how to handle this predicament he now found himself in. Should he have a brief dalliance with her knowing it would end all too soon, or should he go back to the way things had been before they kissed on the balcony? It was a dilemma he hadn't imagined he would be dealing with. He had much to reckon with in this time and his own.

Chapter 7

The sun had barely risen above the horizon when Susanna, Edward and Addie made their way to the docks.

“How are we going to do this?” Addie asked, appearing nervous.

“You and I will be fine,” Susanna assured her. “Edward’s going to be an issue.”

“Do not worry about me. I’ll get aboard without being seen.” Edward’s lips curled in a devilish smile.

Susanna had her doubts he could pull it off, but if he didn’t and got caught they’d have to figure something else out. Although she had no idea what that would be. How was he so calm about everything while she was a wreck?

She and Addie showed their passports and tickets as they boarded. She glanced back over her shoulder for Edward, more than once, but he was gone. They were assigned a cabin, but Susanna thought they should hang around on deck so Edward could find them. So they stood by the rail and watched as the last of the passengers boarded the ship and the gangplank was pulled up.

As the ship began to move, Susanna couldn’t believe how nervous she was. “What if he didn’t make it aboard?”

“I have every faith that he managed it somehow,” Addie replied.

Hands on her hips, Susanna turned to her friend. “How? You hardly know the man and we’ve been standing here for at least an hour while everyone boarded.”

Addie held up one finger. “He’s first and foremost a pirate. Something tells me he’s sneaked on and off of many ships.”

“I hope you’re right.” Susanna was worried. It would only take one thing to go wrong for their plan to be a failure.

“I am,” Addie smiled brightly as she focused on whatever was going on behind Susanna.

Susanna spun around to see a man, who looked a lot like Edward, emerge from the stairwell that led below deck. He carried a shopping bag in one hand and was wearing a pair of jeans and a t-shirt that fit him like a glove. Aviator sunglasses covered his eyes. He walked directly towards them.

“Where’d you get those clothes?” Susanna asked, not sure if she really wanted to know the answer to her question.

“I charmed the lovely woman who works in the gift shop. Is that what it’s called?” Edward seemed pleased with himself

Susanna and Addie nodded in unison.

“She helped me pick them out and was more than happy to give them to me in exchange for some of the coin I had in my jacket. Apparently it’s worth more now than it was back in my time. She seemed quite pleased with the deal we made.”

“Did you give her all your coins?” Susanna asked.

“Never fear. I’ve many more where those came from. I’ve some in my pockets and more in Bermuda.”

“Buried treasure?” Addie asked, her eyes lighting up like a Christmas tree.

“No. Just safely tucked away aboard *The Dagger*.” He gazed at them over the tops of his sunglasses.

Susanna’s stomach did a flip flop as he focused his eyes on her. “That doesn’t seem very safe. It’s a ship filled with pirates.”

“We are respectful of each other,” he assured them. “And to be sure no one is tempted, I have a secret spot where I keep things.”

Susanna tore herself away from his gaze, glancing around the ship’s deck. “Now that you’re here, we can go to our cabin. I was worried you wouldn’t make it on board before we left.”

“I’m surprised you would doubt me.” The twinkle in his eye told her he wasn’t serious.

Even still, she felt the need to clear things up. “I said worried, not doubted.”

“This ship has no sails.” It was stated as a fact and while he may have been surprised, he seemed more intrigued by it than anything else.

“It runs on an engine.” Susanna wasn’t an expert on boats, but she knew enough to know that was how it worked.

Addie walked ahead of them. Susanna was in front of Edward whose masculine energy was making her feel all wobbly legged. She took a deep breath and focused on walking while trying not to think about the man right behind her.

They went one level below deck, down a long narrow hallway to their stateroom. Opening the door, Addie stopped, causing Edward and Susanna to almost knock her over as they bumped into each other. “Nice digs!”

“I figured we’d want as much space as possible, which on a cruise ship isn’t a lot,” Susanna said. Bunk beds and a fold out sofa bed would be enough room for all three of them and the sliding door that led to a small balcony with chairs gave them breathing room. “I think

we should all stay below deck as much as possible. We don't want to draw any attention Edward's way."

"He might have already blown it with the trip to the gift shop," Addie said.

"Hopefully not." Susanna plopped down on the sofa, putting her feet up on the small coffee table in front of it.

"Sharon was a lovely woman. I can't imagine she'd say anything. Even if she did, she has no idea where to find me," Edward said.

He seemed pretty sure of himself and if he wasn't concerned, why should she be? "Let's keep it that way," Susanna responded.

"Aye, Captain." He playfully saluted Susanna, before heading out to the balcony. "This is quite an impressive vessel."

Susanna followed while Addie stayed inside and seemed glued to her phone. "I guess it is." She'd never really given it a second thought. In her mind it was a boat, not much different than any other boat, except bigger.

Edward wrapped an arm around her shoulders, pulling her in front of him and holding her close.

With her body pressed against his, she could feel every inch of him as she melted into his embrace. His arms were so strong. She'd been noticing how his biceps bulged in his new t-shirt. It was certainly a change from his pirate clothes, although they were pretty sexy too. Susanna leaned her head back against his chest enjoying the feel of him and pushing aside those pesky thoughts running through her head that wanted to ruin this for her.

"Susanna, what are we to do?" Edward asked.

"I'm sorry. What do you mean?" She glanced up at him, her eyes homing in on his strong jawline.

"About us? What are we to do?" He turned her to face him, placing his hands on her hips.

"I don't know." It was apparent he'd been having the same thoughts she'd been having.

"I'm feeling things for you that I've never felt before. I don't want this to end." The sincerity in his eyes and voice were real. There was no pretense to what he was saying.

"Maybe it doesn't have to." Susanna's mind was working a mile a minute to figure this all out.

"You mean you'd stay in my time?" Edward asked, seeming surprised.

"No, of course not. I thought you'd stay in mine." Her eyebrows crinkled as she realized this wasn't going to be an easy fix.

"I see, but that isn't possible."

"It could be." Susanna paused. Now was not the time to decide this. They had known each other for a couple of days. She certainly

wouldn't give up her life for him and she wouldn't ask him to do that either. They had only shared one kiss, after all. One spectacular kiss. They needed to slow down and stop overanalyzing everything. "Let's just play it by ear. Enjoy the time we have together and see where it leads us. Can we do that?" After a short time, they would say goodbye, just like every other guy she'd dated. Only this one was going to stay in a whole other century. "We've only just met and this is new to both of us. Don't overthink it."

How could someone look relieved and pained all at the same time? Edward pulled her in close, hugging her and resting his chin on the top of her head. "Don't overthink it. I've never heard that expression before. I like it."

"Good, because I don't use it often. In fact I tend to overthink everything. This will be a first for me."

He chuckled. The sound reverberated through his chest, strangely comforting her and reminding Susanna that she hadn't allowed herself to be this vulnerable in a long time.

"Hey, you two," Addie said from inside. "I'm getting hungry. Should we go get something to eat or order something?"

"To be on the safe side I think we should order food," Susanna said.

"I've got the room service menu right here." Addie examined it. "Burger and fries for me."

"Let me see it," Susanna said, taking it from her. "I just want something light. Seared ahi tuna salad for me. What do you want, Edward?"

The look he gave her took her breath away. Closing her eyes, Susanna looked away for a moment before getting it together and returning her gaze to him.

"I believe I'll have what Addie's having," he said.

"Do you even know what it is?"

"No. It sounds intriguing."

"You'll love it," Addie assured him.

Their food arrived about thirty minutes later. Susanna picked at hers. She wasn't very hungry. "Do you want the rest?" she asked Edward.

He happily took it from her, finishing every bite of the salad and his own meal. "The food aboard this ship is very good. The best I've had while at sea."

"Refrigeration and a full kitchen probably make a difference," Addie said.

"You don't get much fresh food while at sea?" Susanna asked.

"Only when we're in port. We take fruits and vegetables with us, but they only last a short while."

“How do you do it? I wouldn’t be able to survive.”

“It is the life of a seafaring man. We cannot change it and so we accept it.”

“In other words, it is what it is,” Addie said.

Susanna made a face, scrunching her nose in distaste. “I hate that saying. It’s so overused.”

“Yeah. I guess it is.” Addie finished her fries and gathered their dirty dishes and trays. “I always feel weird just leaving these in the hallway.” She opened the cabin door and placed them outside.

“Do the servants come to take them away?” Edward asked.

“Yes, but they’re not called servants. They’re people who work on the boat,” Susanna explained.

“Do you think we could sneak up on deck once it gets dark?” Edward asked. “The sun is beginning to set.”

“Maybe,” Susanna said. “We’d have to be careful.”

“Of course.”

“Hey, I forgot to tell you,” Addie said, her voice filled with excitement. “When we were with Mr. Plumb, I managed to get a photo of the map he had.”

“How could you forget something like that?” Susanna asked.

She shrugged her shoulders. “You know me. I’m easily distracted.”

“That’s good to know. When we get back to my time we can search for it.” Edward was now completely aware of phones and photos because Addie was constantly taking pictures of him, Susanna and almost everything else she saw.

“How do we even know our phones will work once we get there?” Susanna asked.

“You’ve got a point. I can probably print it out here on the ship and then we’ll have it on paper.”

“Make more than one copy. One for each of us, that way if we lose one we’ll still be able to find our way to the treasure.”

“I pinned the location on my phone. I’ll translate that into latitude and longitude. Would that help?” she directed her question to Edward.

“Possibly. It’s worth a try.”

“This is going to be so much fun! I can’t wait.” Addie was bobbing up and down with excitement.

“You seem pretty sure we’re going to be able to time travel,” Susanna said.

“If Danielle did it and Edward did it, then it’s completely possible.”

Susanna shook her head and laughed.

“Don’t laugh. This is going to be the best blog post I’ve ever written, so if I have anything to say about it, we are definitely going back to 1724.”

“Okay. Okay. I’m going to set aside my doubts for now,” Susanna

said.

"We'll get there. I know we will," Addie assured them.

"I agree with Addie," Edward said, giving Addie a wink.

The sun had finally set. Addie was busy with her phone and computer. Edward motioned to Susanna to come with him as he headed for the door.

"We'll be back. We're just going up on deck for a bit," Susanna said.

"How long is a bit?" Edward asked.

"You know, I have no idea," Susanna said.

Edward took her hand, guiding her down the passageway that would lead them up to the deck. He wanted time alone with her. There were a few other couples strolling the deck and he thought how fortunate he was to be here with Susanna on this night. He'd walked many a deck, but never with anyone so lovely as she. They stopped when they reached the bow of the ship. Edward turned to her, cupping her chin in his hand. Susanna gazed up at him, smiling a sweet smile that made him sure that somehow everything would be all right. He'd survive August thirtieth and Susanna would stay with him. He wasn't sure how he would convince her to do so, but he felt it in his heart.

"Are you going to kiss me, or are you going to keep staring at me?" Her smile turned from sweet to amused. He couldn't resist. Her lips were calling to him and he wished to taste the sweetness they offered. She placed her hands on his chest and he pulled her closer, wrapping her in his embrace and enjoying kiss after kiss after kiss.

"How have I lived this long without you?" he asked in all seriousness.

"Good question." There was a teasing lilt to her tone. "I'm afraid I don't have an answer for you."

"Perhaps there is no answer, but you are here now and I do not wish to be without you ever."

Susanna pulled back to gaze up into his face. She was about to speak when they were interrupted.

"There you are," a woman's voice carried to them as she approached. "I didn't think I'd find you, but you're so tall I thought maybe I'd get lucky."

“Sharon,” Edward said, noting it was the woman from the shop.

“My boss was peeved with me for taking your silver coins. He told me I’d better find you and get real money for those things or he’d dock my paycheck.”

“But the coins are real money,” Edward said, releasing Susanna and turning to Sharon.

“I know, but he wants a credit card or dollar bills.”

“How much is the total?” Susanna asked.

“I’d have to go back to the shop to get the total. Why don’t you come with me? That way I can run your card.”

“I don’t have a card,” Edward said. He was confused.

“Don’t worry. I’ll take care of it,” Susanna said. “I keep telling him he needs a credit card, but he likes to do things the old-fashioned way.”

“I understand,” Sharon said. “My husband’s the same.”

They followed her to the gift shop where Susanna paid for Edward’s clothing.

“Thank you so much. I don’t make much money on these cruises. It would have really set me back if he docked me.”

“It’s perfectly fine, don’t worry,” Susanna said.

“Here’s your silver back,” she said.

“You keep it, Sharon. I want you to have it,” Edward said.

“That’s so generous of you. Are you sure?” She asked, seeming surprised and pleased all at the same time.

“Very.”

“I’ll treasure it. You have no idea how much I love things like this.”

“It’s probably worth more than you think,” Susanna added.

“I don’t care what it’s worth really. I’ll just hold onto it as a keepsake.”

“We should go, Edward. Addie will be wondering where we are.”

“Is that your daughter?” Sharon asked.

“Oh, no. She’s a friend we’re traveling with.”

“Well, thank you again. If I don’t see you before we dock, have a great vacation.”

“Thanks. We will.” Susanna turned toward the door, seeming ready to get out of there.

Edward gave Sharon a slight bow, which seemed to delight her to no end. A huge smile spread across her face.

“Shall we?” He put out his hand and Susanna placed hers inside of it. They strolled back across the deck. Edward felt really happy. Happier than he had in a long time. He set the worry of what might happen when they arrived in Bermuda aside. Being with Susanna on this adventure was all he wanted to think about.

W hen the time came for them to disembark from the boat,

Edward disappeared into the crowd. Once again, Susanna craned her neck to see where he had gone, but he vanished from her sight. She could only pray that he would get off of the ship safely.

“He didn’t tell me he was leaving,” Susanna said to Addie.

“Me either.”

“How are we supposed to know where to find him?” Worry crept into her voice.

Addie seemed to understand and tried to reassure her. “Good question, but I’m sure Edward knows what he’s doing.”

“I guess you’re right. Once we’re off the ship we’ll have to keep our eyes open for him.”

They made their way through the crowd of people, through customs and out onto Front Street. Susanna glanced around for Edward, but he was nowhere to be seen. “I guess we’ll wait here for him.”

Addie nodded her agreement, setting her backpack down beside her. Susanna did the same with hers and the one she had purchased for Edward’s clothes.

Susanna checked her phone for the time. They’d been waiting for almost an hour. A taxi pulled up in front of them and the back door flew open.

“Get in,” Edward said, peeking his head out for them to see.

“How did you...?” Susanna started.

“I’ll explain later. This lovely gentleman is going to take us where we need go. Are you ready?”

“As ready as I’ll ever be,” Susanna said, scooting in next to him and leaving room for Addie who couldn’t seem to stop smiling.

“I hope you know where we’re going,” Susanna said.

“If there’s one thing I know, it’s my way around Bermuda. We’ve got to get to St. George’s first,” Edward explained.

“Is it far?” Susanna asked.

“We’ll be there in thirty minutes or so, Miss.” The taxi driver turned back to give them a reassuring smile and nod of his head.

“You see, there’s nothing to worry about.” Edward squeezed her hand, placing it between both of his, holding on.

“I wish I could be so relaxed about all of this,” Susanna said trying to keep the apprehension out of her voice.

“It’s exciting, don’t you agree, Addie?” Edward asked.

“Are you kidding me? I can hardly wait!”

Susanna wished she could be so relaxed about what they were about to do, or about to try to do. She just had to remember she was going to see Danielle and that was all that really mattered. That and being with Edward.

Chapter 8

The taxi drove them to the end of the road as Edward had instructed. He believed for some reason that the person who lived here could help them.

"Thank you, William," Edward said.

"Are you sure you don't need me to wait for you?" William asked.

"We're sure," Addie said. "Susanna pay the man."

Susanna handed him the fare and a large tip. Her bank account was dwindling quickly, but this was important. She'd pay any price to see her friend alive again.

"Thank you, Miss. Enjoy your day."

As the cab pulled away, all three turned to look at a small cottage that was the only building visible on a long sandy stretch of beach.

"This is nice," Susanna said, taking in the view of the ocean only steps away. "I'd love to live on the beach."

"Not always the best place to be when a storm blows in," Edward replied.

"I guess not." She breathed in the scent of the sea and even though it was quite hot, it felt good to be where they were.

"This is the place where, in my time, one would find the hag," Edward explained.

"That's not a very nice thing to call her," Susanna said.

"Does she have a name?" Addie asked.

"I believe it's Morwenna," Edward replied.

"Did someone summon me." The door of the cottage had opened without them hearing it. "I'm Morwenna."

"Oh!" Susanna eyed Edward, elbowing him in the ribs.

"Morwenna. I'm Edward Sutherland."

"I know who you are. You're the fool who took the traveling stone I gave Danielle."

Somehow Edward had made this woman very unhappy judging by the scowl she was directing his way.

Edward backed up a bit in a very uncharacteristic way as she approached "I didn't mean to."

"Of course not. No one ever *means* to." She eyed the three of them

as Edward placed himself in front of the women.

"I need your help. I must return to my own time," Edward explained.

"And I want to go with him." Susanna moved out from behind him.

"Me, too." Addie added, moving to his other side.

"Why should I send you all back? It would mean nothing but trouble." Her long gray locks flowed out behind her as a gust of wind came in off the ocean.

"You helped Danielle," Susanna said.

"It wasn't her fault that she was thrown through time. The Triangle did it. She needed help and I gave it to her. It was up to her whether she would use the stone or not."

"Couldn't you help us, too? Edward wants to go home and I want to see Danielle. I have to make sure she's happy and where she wants to be."

"And you?" she directed her question to Addie. "What is your reason?"

"I just want to know if it's possible. I've always believed it was and this is my opportunity to see it for myself."

"I must think about this." Morwenna went back inside and closed the door.

"What are we supposed to do now?" Susanna asked.

"Wait," Edward replied. He took Susanna's hand and walked with her towards the water. "Come with us, Addie."

"I'm right behind you."

As they approached the water, Addie plunked herself down on the sand.

"We'll be back," Susanna said, turning back to find Addie's nose in her phone as usual.

"I know." Addie's voice dripped with sarcasm.

"This is beautiful," Susanna said. "I'm happy I'm getting to see it with you."

"You've been to Bermuda before haven't you?" Edward asked.

"Yes, but I was so upset about Danielle that I couldn't possibly enjoy any of it." It had been the worst moment of her life seeing Danielle thrown overboard and disappearing beneath the waves.

"I believe there's a storm on the way." Dark clouds had suddenly appeared and were rolling in from the south.

A flash of lightning off in the distance lit the sky, followed not too long after by thunder. "We should get Addie and find shelter," Edward said, hurrying her back up the beach.

"Won't Morwenna let us stay in her cottage until the storm passes?" Susanna asked. She couldn't imagine the woman would leave

them out in the storm.

“Let’s find out,” Edward said.

The wind picked up, pushing them up the beach to Addie who hadn’t moved at all since they’d left her.

“Addie. There’s a storm coming. I’m going to see if Morwenna will let us stay in her cottage.” Susanna said, moving toward the door that had been closed on them earlier.

“I sure hope so, because I didn’t make us a reservation anywhere,” Addie sheepishly admitted.

“Why wouldn’t you?” Susanna couldn’t believe her ears.

“I thought we’d be long gone by now.”

“Addie...” Susanna growled.

“Don’t be angry with her. I thought the same.” Edward said.

Susanna knocked on Morwenna’s door. If she angered Morwenna while she was thinking, it might be a lost cause for them, but they had nowhere else to go. They were a good long walk from any other buildings and the lightning could be dangerous.

When there was no answer she knocked again. The door swung open on an empty room.

“Where is she?” Addie asked.

“I don’t know. You didn’t see her leave?” Addie had been sitting there the whole time, but as usual she was preoccupied with her phone.

“No. I wasn’t really paying attention. I was busy posting the next installment of my blog post about time traveling. I thought she’d let us know when she was ready for us,” Addie explained.

“I hope she’s not too angry with us for breaking into her cottage.” Susanna looked around for a light. The cottage was dark with only one window that was shuttered to keep out the heat.

“We didn’t technically break in. The door opened on its own,” Addie said.

“It did. I saw it,” Edward agreed.

The rain began pelting the rooftop of the one room cottage. Thunder and lightning rolled over the top of them, feeling closer than any of them had ever experienced. One particularly loud clap of thunder caused Susanna to jump right into Edward’s arms. He wrapped them around her and she felt an immediate sense of calm. The door to the cottage swung open on a gust of wind. The sweet, pungent smell of ozone filled the air as one last bolt of lightning struck just outside the cottage, felling a large palm tree which smoldered from the strike. A strong gust of wind caused the door to slam shut. Addie rushed to join Edward and Susanna who were huddled together in the center of the room.

As soon as it had begun, it seemed to end. Sunshine blazed through

the cracks around the door and window, followed by a light, warm breeze.

“That was one fast storm.” Addie opened the door to the cottage and walked out. “You aren’t going to believe this,” she called back to Susanna and Edward.

“What?” Susanna peeked her head out the door.

“No palm tree.”

“How can that be? We all saw it fall and the lightning was so close you could almost feel it.” Susanna couldn’t believe her eyes.

Edward followed Susanna out the door. “Something’s not right.”

They turned to look at Morwenna’s cottage and it was completely different than it had been only a few short moments ago. It now resembled more of a shack than the modern-looking little one room home they’d just been in.

Morwenna appeared in the doorway. “Oh, good. It worked.”

“What worked?” Susanna asked, even though she knew exactly what Morwenna was going to say.

“The time travel. I wasn’t sure it would. I’ve never sent more than one person at a time, so this was more of an experiment.”

Susanna shuddered to think what might have happened had it not worked.

“We’re back in 1724 then?” Edward asked.

“You are, or at least I hope you are.” Morwenna cackled. “You’ll find out soon enough.”

Addie hadn’t said a word. Instead she stood with her mouth agape in total shock.

“What’s wrong with your friend?” Morwenna asked.

“Addie, are you alright?” Susanna asked.

“I’m...I’m... We time traveled!” Her face lit up with excitement as she spun around and around. “How do we know? How can we tell?”

“Come along. We’ll walk into St. George’s to see Lady Charlotte Abernethy.” He put an arm around Addie and turned her toward the road. “Thank you, Morwenna.”

“Wait. How do we get back?” Susanna asked.

“Visit me again and I’ll see what I can do. No promises I can do it for a second time.”

“I thought you...” Morwenna closed the door in her face. She turned to Edward. “I thought she did this before.” She was overcome with a sudden stomach-churning anxiety.

“There’s nothing you can do about it now. Let’s go see if we can find Danielle.”

The thought of seeing her friend pushed everything else she was thinking and feeling to the back of her mind.

“This is so exciting,” Addie said. “I can’t believe we did it.”

Edward beckoned to Susanna to join him, which she did. There was no way she was letting him out of her sight. She was in a strange land at a strange time and Edward and Addie were all she had to anchor her in the moment.

“Edward, I’m worried.” Susanna moved closer to him, needing to touch him and reassure herself he was real.

“I know, Susanna.” He seemed to understand her need for the comfort he could give. “Come here.” He wrapped her in his arms as they walked slowly down the path away from the cottage.

“Addie and I aren’t dressed for this time. Won’t people think we’re strange?” Susanna asked looking at the long sundresses and sandals they both wore.

“They may. Lady Charlotte will take care of everything. She’ll give you both clothes to wear and a place to stay. All will be well.”

He sounded so sure of himself. She thought about how he must have felt visiting her time. He had never once worried what anyone would think of him. She wished she had that confidence. She knew that she and Addie had more reason to worry in this time than they did their own. Women were treated differently. Would she be forced to hide who she really was? What if they couldn’t go back home? What then? All these thoughts bombarded her as she walked, so much so that she hadn’t paid any attention to her surroundings.

“Here we are,” Edward said, opening a gate that led to a soft pink home with a white roof. They walked up some steps where Edward knocked on the door and they waited.

When the door opened a well-dressed gentleman stood before them. “Mr. Sutherland. A pleasure to see you.”

“Is Lady Charlotte at home, Harold?” Edward asked.

“She is. Please come in.”

“Harold, this is Susanna Cole and Addie Michaels.”

“I’ll let Lady Charlotte know you are here.” He left them and Edward guided Susanna and Addie into a sitting room off of the entry.

Susanna closed her eyes and took in a deep breath, calming her frazzled nerves. Addie wandered around the room examining everything, much as Edward had in Susanna’s apartment.

“Edward! How good to see you. We were all worried about you after you left the other day and didn’t return.” A striking older woman entered the room.

“Yes. I had an interesting experience. One I’m sure you are familiar with,” he said.

“What is that?” she asked.

“I traveled through time to the future. This is Susanna Cole and Addie Michaels. They are friends of Danielle’s.”

Instead of seeming surprised, Lady Charlotte appeared delighted.

"I'm so happy to meet you. I'm sure Edward has told you that I too have traveled through time."

"You mean this isn't the time period you were born into?" Susanna asked.

"No. It isn't. I'm from your time, although I've been here many years."

"Is Danielle here?" Susanna asked.

"I'm afraid not. She's with Jameson. They've gone to Hamilton. As a matter of fact, they've been searching for you, Edward."

"I'll call her," Addie volunteered, before realizing her phone wasn't going to work.

Lady Charlotte laughed. "Danielle has said the same thing many times since she's been here."

"When will they return?" Susanna asked.

"They've only just left. It could be a day or two before they'll be back. You are welcome to stay here with me for as long as you need to."

"Thank you. We appreciate it."

"Please have a seat. Harold will bring us some tea and biscuits."

Susanna sat next to Edward on the settee, while Addie and Lady Charlotte each sat in chairs facing them.

"How lucky of you to find Susanna," Lady Charlotte said, eyeing Edward.

"It was the letter Danielle wished me to send. It was in my pocket. It helped me locate her."

"How fortuitous." Lady Charlotte beamed happily at both of them.

"Very," Edward agreed.

Susanna was entertained by the amused looks passing between the two.

"I imagine Alyce will have nothing to fear, will she, my dear?"

"She will not." Edward said, casting a glance in Susanna's direction.

Something was going on between them and Susanna was going to get to the bottom of it, but it could wait until she was alone with Edward.

"This is so exciting." She rang a small bell set on the tea table in front of them.

Harold arrived with their tea and biscuits, which he set on the table.

"Harold, we'll be having company for dinner tonight. Please let Louisa know and have Alyce make up enough guest rooms for three."

"Of course." He bowed and left the room.

"How did you get used to this fancy lifestyle?" Susanna said.

Lady Charlotte poured the tea and handed cups to all of them. "Is

it fancy?"

"Fancier than I'm used to."

"Me, too," Addie said.

"It was unusual at first, but I adapted rather quickly. I'd read enough books about this time period. It had been a fascination of mine."

"I guess that would help," Addie said.

"I know why you're here, Susanna. What about you, Addie?"

"The time travel. I wanted to know if it was a real thing. I mean, I've always thought it was, but I had no proof. Now I do."

Charlotte laughed. "You certainly do."

Susanna was enjoying herself, as strange as it was to be sitting for tea in another century. She was glad Addie was with her. She was full of curiosity and excitement, which was obviously endearing her to Lady Charlotte.

"I imagine you ladies will need to change into more appropriate clothing. We want you to fit in as much as possible while you're here. I've got many dresses to choose from."

"I hope they fit," Susanna said.

"They'll fit well enough. You're a bit taller than I am, but we'll make do and if we can't find something that fits you perfectly then Edward can take you to the dressmaker to get you something that will fit better."

Susanna snuck a peek at Edward, who almost choked on the tea he was sipping. "I take it you haven't bought a woman a dress before."

"I haven't, but I'm sure it will be an enjoyable experience." From the look on his face, Susanna suspected he didn't really believe what he was saying.

"Addie, I don't think we'll have a problem fitting you. If we have to make any adjustments Alyce will be happy to do it for you."

"Thank you. It will be like going to a costume party."

"A very long one in my case," Charlotte giggled. She finished her tea and set the cup down. "Did you leave anyone special behind?"

"Only my parents," Susanna said.

"No husband?" Charlotte asked, casting a sideways glance at Edward.

Susanna wrinkled her nose. "No. No one."

"Interesting, don't you think, Edward?" Charlotte asked.

Apparently caught off guard once again, this time he almost spilled the tea. He managed to save it and placed it on the table.

"What about you, Addie?" Charlotte wondered.

"Just my coworkers," she answered.

"The two of you are so lovely. I can't imagine someone hasn't snatched either of you up."

Addie shrugged her shoulders, seeming disinterested in the topic.

"Just haven't found the right one yet," Susanna offered, not knowing how else to approach the subject.

"Love is a strange thing. It appears out of nowhere when you least expect it. Isn't that right, Edward?"

Susanna could see the discomfort rolling off of Edward as he seemed to wonder why he kept being dragged into this discussion.

"I wouldn't know," he replied, giving her a scathing look.

"Of course not, because it hasn't happened to you yet." Lady Charlotte for her part seemed to be enjoying his discomfort.

Susanna thought she might be imagining things, but it sure felt as though Lady Charlotte was trying her hand at a little matchmaking. It was something she recognized because her mother was constantly trying to fix her up with any available man who crossed her path.

Time to change the subject, Susanna thought.

"Do we have time before dinner for Susanna and Addie to see *The Dagger*?" Edward asked.

"Let's get them dressed properly and then you've got plenty of time to see the ship and get back."

"I'll wait here," Edward said.

"Come along ladies. Let's go upstairs and have some fun." Charlotte led the way out of the room.

Susanna cast an inquisitive look Edward's way. He returned what she read to be a reassuring smile, which was exactly what she needed in that moment.

Chapter 9

A frequent visitor to Lady Charlotte's home, Edward always felt welcomed. Even Lady Charlotte's scolding him for flirting with Alyce was done out of her concern for both of them. She expected him to be a better man. So far he felt he'd been a disappointment. He smiled. There was something different about the way she'd spoken to him today that showed her approval. Perhaps there was hope for him after all. Now that Jameson had found Danielle and was happy, Lady Charlotte had turned her matchmaking eye on him and he wanted no part of it. Susanna was a lovely woman to look at and she certainly challenged him at every turn, which no woman before her had ever done. Could he see himself settling down with her? It wasn't likely. She would want to go home as soon as she spent some time with Danielle and then where would he be? It was not in his plans to be a broken-hearted fool.

Feeling restless, he stood and paced the room, stopping as a movement outside the window caught his eye. Several familiar looking men passed by the house, loudly laughing and jostling each other as they went. With a finger to his lips he did his best to recall where he'd seen them before, but nothing came to mind. Jittery at the prospect of being dead in a few days he was allowing his mind to run away with him.

Harold passed by the room and Edward called to him.

"Yes, sir." Harold appeared in the doorway.

"Do you know who those men are?" he pointed at the receding figures as they moved on down the road.

"I'm afraid not, sir. Though I have seen them pass by the house these last few days."

"Thank you, Harold."

The man went about his duties, leaving Edward to wonder about what he'd just seen and why it bothered him so.

He heard the sound of the women as a door opened on the floor above him. As they moved down the stairs he could hear them chatting excitedly and laughing. He met them at the foot of the stairs.

"You all look lovely," he said, his gaze moved quickly from Addie

to rest on Susanna. His eyes lingered there. In the soft pink dress she wore, she looked more beautiful than he could have imagined. It seemed as if she belonged here in his time. He hoped she wouldn't read the longing on his face. What was it about her that caused his heart to race and his mind to turn to thoughts of love?

"Don't they? I was able to find a dress that was a perfect fit for Susanna. No need for dress shopping, unless you really want to, Edward."

"Perhaps another time. Right now I'd like to check in on *The Dagger*." He didn't see the need in this moment to share the news about seeing *The Dagger* in the future with Charlotte and it seemed Susanna hadn't either.

"We're excited to see your ship. From what Lady Charlotte was telling us it's quite something." Susanna's shy smile was a contradiction to him. She was anything but shy. Could it be that she felt something for him? Something that had built over the past few days?

"Let's be off then," He put an arm out for Susanna and, being the gentleman he liked to believe he was, he did the same for Addie. With both women on his arms he headed for the door, which was opened for him by Harold. "We'll be back in no time."

"Enjoy yourselves," Charlotte said, waving to them as they left.

He turned right on the road that passed in front of the house, following in the direction the mysterious group of men had gone. Perhaps not the best choice, he turned down a side street that would lead them to the docks in a more circuitous way. He had to protect the ladies in his charge. There was no point in exposing them to the likes of the thuggish lot lurking about near Charlotte's residence.

Susanna and Addie were both quiet and seemed to be examining every little detail as they walked. It had been much the same for him in their time, so he understood their curiosity.

"There she is," Edward nodded toward *The Dagger* as they rounded the corner onto the road leading to the docks. Up ahead of them was the same group of men, standing just beyond the ship, waiting for something or someone. He hoped it wasn't him.

"It's a pirate ship!" Addie shouted. "A real pirate ship!"

Edward could feel the excitement emanating from her as she clung to his arm and couldn't help but laugh.

"Whoa! It looks exactly the same." Susanna whispered, just loud enough for him to hear.

They reached the gangplank where they were greeted by Hawes, Lynk and Samuel. "Where on earth have ye been?" Hawes asked, sounding angry. "We've been searching for ye in every brothel and tavern on the isle."

“Hawes!” Eyes wide, he motioned with his head to the women he was escorting.

“Beggin’ yer pardon ladies.” Hawes dipped his head, before he whispered to Edward. “Ye’ve two today. How do ye do it?”

“Hawes, it may be best to stop talking,” Samuel said.

He came part way down the gangplank and extended a hand to Addie. “May I?”

She seemed happy to let go of Edward and place her gloved hand in Samuel’s. “Yes, please.”

Hawes scurried up to the deck. Edward followed at a more leisurely pace, taking into account the fact that Susanna seemed to be struggling a bit with the dress she wore. “We’re almost there.” He glanced down at her upturned face and smiled reassuringly before stepping onto the deck and guiding Susanna to do the same.

Samuel hadn’t released Addie’s hand and she didn’t seem in any hurry to take it back.

“Well, where have ye been?” Hawes demanded of Edward.

“I’ll tell you all about it once Jameson returns, but I believe I’ve an angle on the treasure we seek.”

“Plumb’s?” Hawes asked.

“The very same.”

Hawes slapped his thigh and danced around the deck.

“He seems excited,” Susanna noted.

“They all will be. We’ve been searching for some time now.” He turned away from Hawes and the others. “Come with me. I’ll show you the captain’s quarters.”

“I’m curious to see them in their original state,” Susanna said.

“Samuel, show Lady Addie around, would you please?”

“It would be a pleasure.” He turned to Addie. “Have ye ever been aboard a ship like this?”

“I haven’t.”

“He’s a cutie,” Susanna said, watching as her friend walked away with Samuel.

“I’m sorry. He’s a what?” Edward asked.

Susanna laughed. “Lost in translation, I guess. He’s a good-looking guy.”

“Should I be jealous?” he asked, doing his best to make his voice light and carefree.

“Oh, Edward, you are something.” She rolled her eyes as she said this.

“What?” he asked, not understanding yet again.

“Never mind. You shouldn’t be jealous. You’re a cutie, too.”

Edward smiled, assuming it was a compliment and that she thought him good looking as well. “Right this way, m’lady.” He

headed up the stairs, the same one's that three hundred years in the future had seemed no worse for wear.

"This is so surreal," Susanna said. "Having just seen this ship in my time and now seeing it again in this time. It's hard to believe it survived that long."

"I was just thinking the same thing," Edward said.

"Great minds think alike." Susanna's eyes danced in her upturned face.

"Yes, I believe they do." Edward reached for the door latch, happy that Susanna seemed to be feeling more at ease.

Entering Jameson's chambers, Edward closed the door behind them. "If you really wish to see the rest of the ship, we can go do that now or we can stay here and wait for Addie." He knew what he hoped she would say.

"I've seen the ship, haven't I? I don't imagine it's much different." She ran her finger down the front of his shirt.

"It's not and the other areas of the ship wouldn't be of much interest. The only thing different is the crew. You've met Hawes and Samuel. The other man was Lynk. They are the most important men aboard."

"What about you? Are you important?" She had a glint in her eyes that told him she was teasing him.

"Very." He took her hand and drew her in closer. She didn't resist, so he placed a hand on her waist.

She placed a hand on his shoulder.

Edward leaned back against the desk. Susanna drew even closer.

"This might be a good time for a kiss," she said, surprising him.

"It might be." He dipped his head tasting her sweet lips with his own.

Susanna wrapped her arms around his neck, tipping her head up to meet his lips more fully.

Her mouth was soft and easily the most kissable he'd ever encountered. She didn't hesitate to delve deeper, her tongue teasing his lips to open and welcome her in. She astonished him with her boldness. Edward pulled her closer, placing his hands on her hips and settling her between his legs. He was surprised when she moved her hand from his neck and placed it on his crotch.

"Mmmm...it's been a long time," she said, confusing him. Edward was not a man who ever felt bested by a woman, especially when it came to the fine art of love, but Susanna had him back on his heels. He hadn't expected this of her and didn't know quite what to make of it. He let her go and pulling back, said. "This isn't the time or place."

"Oh," she seemed disappointed. "I'm sorry. I thought we were both of the same mindset."

“We are, believe me. It’s just that...”

The door flew open and Hawes entered. Susanna jumped back, leaving Edward to fumble for a map to cover his hardened cock.

“Sir. Pardon my interrupting.”

“A knock on the door is always preferable, Hawes.” Edward gave him a look that told him he wasn’t welcome in the cabin, but Hawes either wasn’t understanding him or didn’t care. Edward assumed it was the latter. Perhaps he didn’t understand that Susanna wasn’t the usual type of woman he was seen with.

“Will ye be staying or are ye headed back into town?” Hawes asked.

“We’ll be joining Lady Charlotte for supper,” Edward replied.

“I thought ye should be aware that *The Savage Wolf* docked here a few days ago. They’ve let themselves be known to the men on the dock and at the tavern.”

Now he knew where he’d seen those men before. They were MacCreary’s crew.

“What do they want?” Edward asked, although he was fairly sure he knew exactly what they wanted.

Hawes shrugged his shoulders. “We’re no’ sure. Ye were no’ here and the captain and his lady are off searching for ye. I told the men to keep their distance.”

“Edward, they’re looking for you,” Susanna said. She gripped his hand, her worry flowing through to him.

“We don’t know that,” Edward said. He didn’t want her to worry about him. He could do that all on his own.

Hawes seemed slightly puzzled by their exchange, but apparently believed there was reason for caution. “If ye doona mind, I’ll have some of the crew escort ye back to Lady Charlotte’s.”

“That would look suspicious, don’t you think?” Edward asked.

“Why would it?” Hawes again seemed genuinely bewildered by this.

“It’s best if you create a distraction so that the ladies and I can escape unseen. There’s no need to draw more attention than is necessary by parading by them with a large group of men.”

“If that’s yer wish. I’ll see to it then.” Hawes turned to Susanna. “It’s been a pleasure meeting ye miss.”

“You, too, Hawes.”

He left them and as Edward had ordered, immediately began shouting to the men aboard ship.

“We’ll wait here until it’s safe to go.”

“Edward, I’m afraid.” Her eyes seemed to plead with him.

His response was gruff, but he was hoping to convey confidence enough to allay her fears. “Don’t be. I’m more than capable of taking

care of myself and you.”

Susanna didn't have a good feeling about this. It was August twenty-eighth, the date of Edward's death was looming large.

“Are those men Domnhall MacCreary's men?” she asked as they met Addie and Samuel on deck.

“They are.” Edward was reluctant to answer, but he couldn't keep it from her forever. She was an intelligent woman. She'd figure it out on her own sooner or later.

“I knew it!” Susanna exclaimed.

“What's wrong?” Samuel asked, responding to Susanna's cry.

“Not a thing. We're just trying to get out of here unnoticed.” Edward looked over the ship's rail and turned back with a smile of satisfaction.

A commotion on the docks had men running from every direction to see what was happening. This included the men of *The Savage Wolf*. As soon as they were gone, Edward hurried the women off the ship.

Addie turned and waved to Samuel, who waved back.

“We must hurry,” Edward said. Taking each woman by the hand they ran away from the docks and towards Charlotte's home.

Once there and completely out of breath, Susanna stopped before they reached the door. Grabbing Edward by the arm, she turned him to face her. “We've got to get you out of here.” Her heart was racing in her chest and not just because they'd run all the way from the ship. Fear gripped her, not for herself or Addie, but for Edward. What if history couldn't be changed? What if it was inevitable that he would die on August thirtieth? There had to be something they could do to prevent it, but Edward wasn't helping them. He seemed content to play Russian roulette with his life.

“I'm not going anywhere. I've nothing to fear from MacCreary. He's the most incompetent pirate I've ever known. He's easily outwitted. Ask Danielle when you see her. He's harmless.” Edward knocked on the door, peering over his shoulder as he did so.

Susanna did the same, expecting to see that the men on the docks had discovered their escape and were coming after them.

Harold opened the large-paneled door for them, standing to the side while they entered. The fading daylight filtered into the entryway through the elliptical transom above. “Lady Charlotte has asked that

you wait for her in the dining room.”

“Shall we?” Edward offered his arms to them once again, escorting them to their seats. Charlotte would sit at the head of the table, Addie to her left and Susanna to her right. Edward sat next to Susanna.

She was quivering from all of the adrenaline coursing through her veins. She took a deep breath trying to calm herself and turned to Edward who seemed maddeningly relaxed. “What’s wrong with you?” she asked.

“I’m sorry?”

“Why are you behaving like your life isn’t in danger?” Susanna’s fear was turning to anger.

“My life is always in danger. It’s the life I’ve chosen. If I recounted the number of times I should have wound up dead, we’d be here for hours.”

“But this time it could really happen.” She had to get through to him.

“Susanna, we are safe in this house. It is the best place for us on the whole island. For now, let us set worry aside and enjoy a lovely meal.”

Edward was right. They had plenty of time to argue about his upcoming demise. She should enjoy this moment. “All right.”

The dining room was lit with candelabra set on a sideboard and on the dining table. Harold continued lighting candles around the room, giving it a soft, warm glow. White dinnerware edged with silver and small pink flowers dotting the top and bottom rims of the plates were set in front of them. When Harold was finished lighting the candles, he placed napkins monogrammed with the letter ‘A’ on each of their laps.

“Thank you,” Susanna said. She felt more important in that moment than she ever had in her entire life. She was being treated like royalty.

“Wow,” Addie said. “I feel like I’m waiting for the queen.”

“Not the queen, only me,” Lady Charlotte breezed into the room and took her seat in the chair Harold held out for her.

A small aperitif of dry sherry was placed before each of them. Susanna took a small sip. She needed that drink more than ever and silently wished her glass was bigger. She eyed Addie who seemed oblivious to the conversation she’d been having with Edward.

“What did you think of *The Dagger*?” Charlotte asked.

“It was exactly as I thought it would be,” Susanna said.

“When I was in Susanna’s time, we went to Charleston and found that *The Dagger* is docked there as a museum.”

“Is that true?” Charlotte turned to Addie, who seemed surprised to be asked.

“I wasn’t with them.”

“It’s true,” Susanna confirmed. “Edward was shocked to see it and I have to admit that seeing a ship that is over three hundred years old looking as good as new was quite a surprise.”

“I imagine it was. Jameson will be happy to hear that it has managed to last over the centuries.”

“I wish Danielle was back. I can’t wait to see her,” Susanna said.

“I’m sure they’ll be back soon. She’s spoken about you quite often. I know she’ll be surprised and thrilled that you are here.”

Harold and John, another of Lady Charlotte’s servants, set plates down in front of them.

“Mmmm...this smells delicious,” Addie said, inhaling deeply.

“I hope you enjoy it. Louisa has been hard at work ever since I told her we’d be having visitors.”

“Looks yummy,” Susanna said of the plates filled with codfish and potatoes in a tomato sauce.

The meal and conversation were just what Susanna needed to set aside her anxiety for Edward. They talked for hours and Lady Charlotte told them all about her life before and after time travel.

“You must miss your husband,” Susanna said upon learning that the man who’d won her heart in this time had passed away, leaving Lady Charlotte alone here in the Bermuda of the seventeen hundreds.

“I do, but I’ve many friends nearby and I love them all. I also have Jameson and Edward.”

Susanna gazed at Edward who seemed touched by what she was saying and hoped Charlotte would still have him around on September the first.

Chapter 10

Edward thought about knocking on Susanna's door as he passed by on his way down the stairs. It was early. The sun hadn't fully risen and he thought it would be best to leave her sleeping. She'd only want to join him and he felt she would be safer with Charlotte.

He slipped quietly out the front door and made his way through the back alleys towards *The Dagger*. It was August twenty-ninth. He had one day to turn the tables on MacCreary. He wished Jameson was back to help him, but he could do this on his own. No need to put everyone else in jeopardy. Once he reached *The Dagger* he'd send word to MacCreary and arrange a meeting. He just needed to work out the details. Being aboard *The Dagger* would give him time alone to think.

As he came around the corner of a darkened warehouse building, five men stepped out in front of him. He tried to walk around them, but found himself surrounded.

"If you'll let me pass. I've business on the docks." Edward knew it was a futile request.

"We've been waiting for ye, Sutherland. The captain wishes a word with ye." Edward recognized the man to be MacCreary's first mate. He was a man with a murderous reputation and not someone he wished to tangle with.

"Captain who? And who is Sutherland?" He was trying to buy some time, hoping against hope that he could find a way out of the mess he was currently mired in.

The men laughed. "Captain MacCreary. He's a score to settle with ye."

Edward tried to dart to the side, but was grabbed roughly by the arm. "Ye're coming with us."

Two of the larger men began dragging him down the cobblestone road, which was damp from an early morning rain. His feet slipped and he scrambled to maintain his balance.

"You can let go of my arm. I'll walk with you. I won't try to run," Edward assured them.

"Why should we trust ye?" the first mate asked.

Nothing immediately came to mind, since he knew he had not

always been trustworthy in the past. He chose to state what was obvious. "You outnumber me five to one. I wouldn't stand a chance if I ran."

The man who appeared to be in charge nodded to the ones holding his arms. They let go, but not before shoving him so hard he almost fell to the ground.

"Thank you." Sarcasm dripped from Edward's voice as he righted himself and straightened his jacket.

They continued walking along the dock. Edward searched around for someone, anyone who might help him, but the path they walked was empty. He saw no one and no one saw him. The group passed *The Dagger* and a row of other ships before stopping at the very end of the docks where *The Savage Wolf* was berthed.

Edward knew that physically he would be unable to escape, but he felt that there had to be a way to outsmart MacCreary. Perhaps he could convince him with a map, although he didn't have one with him. He'd left Plumb's map back at Charlotte's home.

"Bring him up. What are ye waitin' for?" Domnhail MacCreary peered over the rail and waved furiously for his men to hurry aboard. Once on deck, he motioned to the quarter deck. "To my cabin."

The men tried to grab Edward's arms again.

"I know the way." Edward shook them off of him and headed for MacCreary's cabin.

MacCreary was hot on his heels. "This is no' yer ship, fool."

"I'm aware of that." Edward opened the door and walked into the cabin.

"As full of yerself as always I see," MacCreary closed the door behind himself. "My men are right outside, so doona think to try anything."

"Jameson's cabin is larger and neater," Edward noted out loud. He knew it would irk MacCreary. Perhaps not the best idea, but he couldn't help himself. He was determined to get under than man's skin in any way possible.

"Ye'll not distract me," MacCreary grumbled.

"What did you want with me?" Edward asked. It was one question he didn't have the answer to and one he'd been wondering about since he learned MacCreary meant to kill him.

"I've been waiting a week for yer captain to show himself, but it seems he's off with that woman," he said with disdain.

"What woman?" Edward knew it was Danielle he was speaking of. She'd made a fool of him more than once in the brief time she'd been here.

"Ye ken what woman." He spat the word out like it was poison. "The one who cheated me of me map. A she-devil if ever there was

one.”

“She’s gotten the better of you I see.” Edward chuckled, irritating MacCreary even more.

“She has no’. I only wish to have what is rightfully mine.” He pounded his fist on his desk, upsetting a jug that sat atop it.

Edward grabbed it before it fell over completely.

“Ye’re fast,” MacCreary observed.

“It’s among my many talents.”

MacCreary looked skyward, obviously exasperated.

“You say you want your map, but you have it. Jameson left it for you when we escaped the island.”

“The Spanish took it from me.” MacCreary grumbled.

It was a good thing MacCreary wasn’t looking at him or he would have been angry at the huge smile this information had put on Edward’s face. He quickly schooled his features and asked, “How did you manage to get away from them?” Edward was truly curious. When the warship had come into sight, Jameson had quickly orchestrated their escape, leaving *The Savage Wolf* at the mercy of the Spanish.

“It took time, but I was able to escape with me life. Another score that needs settling,” he said jabbing his finger into Edward’s chest.

“You still haven’t told me what you want with me? It seems all of your grievances are with Mackall and his lady.”

“They are, but since he’s no’ to be found, ye’ll do nicely in their stead. Mackall’s fond of ye, is he no’?”

“At times.” Edward was hoping MacCreary would give him something he could work with to secure his release.

MacCreary eyed him with disbelief. “Doona lie. Ye’ve long been friends.”

“I see I can’t fool you, MacCreary.” *At least not yet.*

“Ye can no’, so doona bother trying.” He scrubbed his hand over his bearded chin.

Edward raised his hands in the air. “You have me. So what is your plan?”

“Revenge.” Narrowed eyes stared back at Edward.

“I don’t like the sound of that.”

“Ye should no’.” MacCreary’s mood seemed to lighten a bit as he continued speaking. “I’ll be holdin’ ye here as me prisoner until yer captain returns. If he wants to save ye, he’ll have to surrender himself to me.”

“So, I’m to be your hostage. You haven’t had a lot of luck in the past with that kind of thing.” He was thinking about the time MacCreary was forced to give *The Dagger* back to Jameson Mackall after losing at a game of chance. “What happens if he doesn’t wish to

save me?"

"Then I'm sorry to say ye'll have to die. Mackall is the one I'm after. I wish to be rid of him and that woman of his. They've made a fool of me one time too many and I'll no' forget it."

"So this is how I meet my end?" He didn't wish to die, but if it would save Jameson and Danielle, then he would gladly accept his fate.

MacCreary rushed to correct him. "Only if Mackall refuses to save ye. I believe he will. He's a man of principal and honor. It is his downfall."

"I would not ask him to do that for me," Edward said. He wouldn't trade his life for his friends.

MacCreary shook his head in apparent disbelief. "Ye're a fool then."

"Perhaps so."

A knock at the door was followed by someone calling, "Cap'n."

MacCreary opened the door. "Aye."

"Do ye wish to leave port?" the man asked.

"Aye and I want the message delivered to *The Dagger* after we're gone. Leave one of the men behind to see to it."

"Aye, Cap'n."

"Sutherland, I'll leave ye to think about yer fate and to hope Mackall gets me note in time." He closed and locked the door behind him.

Edward wasn't too concerned. He'd find a way out of this mess. He'd escaped many a dangerous situation over the years. This was no different. Except that history told of his death on August thirtieth at the hands of MacCreary. He had just one day left.

He roamed MacCreary's cabin. The man was so sure about his plan that he didn't think he needed to hide anything in his quarters. There were charts and maps everywhere. If it wasn't for the fact that he was so messy, it would be easy for Edward to find something of value. As it was, it would take hours for him to go through everything. He thought of Danielle and the map she'd stolen from MacCreary. She'd seen him put it away. He'd foolishly thought she would leave it where he placed it. Edward wouldn't be that lucky. Instead he put his mind to work on his own escape, which wasn't looking good. Time was of the essence. Perhaps those on *The Dagger* would get the note MacCreary spoke of and would set off after them. That, in reality, may be his only hope.

Susanna would be angry with him for allowing himself to be kidnapped by MacCreary and she'd have every right to be. She had warned him, after all. Edward was relieved she was with Lady Charlotte and out of harm's way. Perhaps this truly was his fate. If it

was, then so be it. He would gladly give up his life if it meant that he could save Jameson and the others, but he hadn't given up hope yet. Deep in his soul he still felt that he could best MacCreary. He would bide his time and the solution to his dilemma would present itself, of that he felt sure. While he waited he thought he might as well see how well he was being guarded.

Using a knife MacCreary had carelessly left on the desk, Edward picked the lock to the cabin and opened it. The ship had only just gotten underway. If it wasn't too far from the dock and if it was possible to get to the rail without being seen, he thought there was a chance he could make it overboard and swim back to shore without being seen. Waiting any longer would make escape impossible. A lot of luck would have to be on his side. Edward took one cautious step outside. He was immediately met with a hard thump to his head, knocking him unconscious and leaving him at the mercy of the men of *The Savage Wolf*.

Chapter 11

“**W**here’s Edward?” Susanna tried to keep the worry from her

voice. It was August twenty-ninth. The day before he was to die.

“I haven’t seen him yet today,” Lady Charlotte said, from her seat at the dining table. “It’s not unlike him to be out all night doing whatever it is he does with his spare time. I wouldn’t worry about it.”

“That’s just it. I am worried.” Susanna couldn’t keep the fear she was feeling out of her voice.

Addie joined them and apparently heard what Susanna had been saying. “He’s not here?”

“I don’t think so,” Susanna answered.

“You’re worried, too, aren’t you?” Lady Charlotte’s demeanor changed as she seemed to realize something serious was happening.

“We researched Edward when we were in New York. The history says he was killed on August thirtieth in the year 1724. That’s tomorrow.” Susanna sat down across from Lady Charlotte.

The three women glanced from one to the other. “What are we going to do?” Addie asked.

“Good question, but it would be helpful if we knew where he’d gone.”

“Harold!” Lady Charlotte called to her servant.

“Ma’am.” He appeared in the doorway apparently never out of earshot.

“Have you seen Mr. Sutherland this morning?” she asked.

“He left before the sun was up.”

“Did he tell you where he was going?”

“*The Dagger*. He said he would return later today.”

“Why would he go out so early and why wouldn’t he tell us he was going?” Lady Charlotte asked.

“It’s obvious he didn’t want us tagging along,” Susanna said.

“We should get to *The Dagger* and make sure he’s all right,” Addie said.

“I’m coming with you,” Lady Charlotte said. She rose from her seat.

“There’s no time to lose. If he’s not there, we’re going to have to

find Domnhaill MacCreary,” Susanna said.

“Is that how he dies? Does MacCreary kill him?” Lady Charlotte asked.

“Yes. That’s exactly what happens.” Susanna scrubbed her fingers through her hair.

“Do you think we can stop it, if it’s what is supposed to happen?” Lady Charlotte seemed on the verge of a panic attack.

“It’s not going to happen if I have anything to do with it.” Susanna shot up out of her chair and marched towards the door. The other women followed her.

“Wait. I’ll get the carriage. It will be faster.” Lady Charlotte turned to Harold, but he had already left the room, perhaps anticipating her need.

As they made their way outside, John was waiting for them beside the carriage. He stood beside the open carriage door.

“That was fast,” Susanna noted.

“Sometimes I think Harold is a mind reader.”

“Thank goodness he is,” Addie said.

John helped the women into the carriage before taking up the reins and heading towards the docks at a good clip. He came to a stop as close to *The Dagger* as he could get.

“Wait for us here,” Lady Charlotte said. “If we’re not back within the hour, go back to the house. We’ll return as soon as we are able.”

The men of *The Dagger* seemed somewhat surprised to see three women marching with purpose up the gangplank of the ship.

“Good day to ye,” Hawes greeted them, giving each a hand as they boarded. “To what do we owe this visit?”

“Where’s Edward?” Susanna blurted out.

“No’ here.” Hawes said.

“Is something wrong?” Samuel appeared at Hawes’ side, a serious look of concern on his handsome face.

“We can’t find Edward. He’s in danger. Do you know where he could be?” Susanna was doing her best to keep herself composed in the face of Edward’s possible demise. She was clearly not very good at losing friends.

“In danger?” Hawes demanded. “From who?”

“Domnhaill MacCreary.”

“His ship just left the harbor,” Lynk said, joining the group. “Shall we set sail after him?”

“We don’t even know if that’s where he is.”

“It is. Believe me.” Susanna said.

“Hawes, I’ve a note just delivered. I recognized the man as one of MacCreary’s.” One of the deckhands gave Hawes the note. He read it and handed it to Lynk. The men exchanged glances. Hawes nodded to

Lyнк who barked orders at the men on deck. They scrambled to do his bidding.

"We're leaving some men ashore," Samuel said.

"They're no' going anywhere and we'll be back before they realize we're gone."

"I hope you're right."

"We need a plan," Susanna said. "We can't go after them without a plan. Edward could be killed if we're not careful."

"What are ye suggesting, lass?" Hawes asked, surprising her. She hadn't imagined it would be easy to get the men of *The Dagger* to do what she thought best. Hawes must have read the look on her face because he said, "Yer friend, Danielle, has the mind of a pirate and if ye're anything like her, I imagine ye do as well."

Susanna controlled her nervous urge to laugh. Danielle, a pirate. That was hard to believe, but he was putting his faith in her so she'd better come up with a good plan.

"Is there somewhere we can go and talk?" Lady Charlotte asked.

"Aye, m'lady, this way." Hawes led them to the quarter deck and the captain's cabin.

They all sat around Jameson's desk. The women in chairs and the men on the corners of the desk.

"Lyнк will get us within firing distance of *The Savage Wolf*." Hawes gazed at Susanna, apparently waiting to hear her foolproof plan.

"Well, I was thinking that instead of firing on his ship, maybe we could get close enough so that the three of us could sneak on board. You could create some sort of diversion giving us enough time to find Edward."

Samuel and Hawes looked at her and then at each other. "And ye believe that will work?" Hawes asked.

"I hope so."

"Hope is a wonderful thing, but in this case, I'm sorry to inform ye we're going to need more than hope," he said.

"I know. This isn't the best plan, but it's the only way we can do this without risking Edward's life."

"How do ye ken Domnhaill plans to kill him?"

"I've got it on good authority is all I can say," Susanna said.

"As ye wish then. After dark, we'll put ye in a skiff and have the men row ye to MacCreary's ship. Once ye're close enough to climb aboard I'll sail the ship as near to *The Savage Wolf* as I can. Me men will attempt to board her, if possible. Either way, we'll engage the crew in battle. Then ye'll have yer diversion and I pray to the good Lord above that ye're successful or Edward won't be the only one to end up dead."

"Addie and I will go on the skiff. Lady Charlotte you should stay

here.”

“I will do no such thing. I’m coming with you,” she said.

“You don’t need to. I don’t want you getting hurt.”

“As much as I scold Edward every time I see him, I love him as much as I love Jameson. I’ve just never thought there was any hope of him becoming more than a ne’er-do-well. I can see how he looks at you. He cares for you more than he even realizes and I think you feel the same way, unless I’m reading more into this than is actually there. I will do anything I can do to aid in his rescue.”

Susanna couldn’t argue with her. She had developed feelings for Edward and very quickly. She’d always been one to take her time with men, but nothing had ever come of it. Edward had found a place in her heart sometime in the last few days and she was having a hard time imagining what it would be like to lose him and to lose the possibility of what might be between the two of them. Or, she told herself, maybe she was just doing the right thing. It wouldn’t be right to know what was going to happen and do nothing about it. Maybe her heart had nothing to do with it at all. Try as she might to talk herself out of the feelings she had for him, she couldn’t do it. So it was a combination of things that had her ready to risk her life to save his.

“Are you sure you wish to do this, Addie?” Samuel asked.

“I wouldn’t miss out on this adventure for anything,” she said.

“I’ll be on the skiff with them, Hawes.” It was a statement, not a request of permission and Hawes seemed to understand it.

“Gather a small crew of men to row the skiff. We should stay far enough behind them so’s they can’t identify the ship.”

“I’ll tell Lynk.” Samuel nodded his head to Addie and left them.

“I doona ken where it is they raise women like ye lassies, but I’m no’ complainin’.”

Lady Charlotte patted his hand. “You wouldn’t believe it if we told you.”

“I’m no’ asking. There are some things that are best left unsaid, Ma’am.”

Edward’s head was throbbing from where he’d been hit and

knocked out once he set foot on the quarter deck of *The Savage Wolf*. MacCreary wasn’t ready to kill him just yet. Not until the 30th if the history was correct. He knew what it was that the man wanted with

him and nothing Edward had to offer would set him free. Even if he told him about Plumb's map, he didn't have it with him. MacCreary would never believe him and why should he? He'd been fooled more than once by the crew of *The Dagger*. Without a map on his person and without information that would be useful to MacCreary he was out of options. He understood that the man wanted revenge and he would get it one way or another.

His brief foray out of the captain's quarters had landed him far below deck in the dark, dank of the ship's brig. No light made its way into his prison. He couldn't even see his hand in front of his face. He had no idea how long he'd been in this hole. It could have been hours for all he knew. Rising to his feet, he held onto his head which was now pulsing with even more pain. He pounded on the door.

A small panel opened on a level with his eyes.

"Aye," the man guarding him said.

"I must speak with MacCreary."

The panel slammed shut, leaving Edward uncertain of his next move. If he could get above deck he would know what was about to happen. If *The Dagger* came alongside he might be able to take advantage of any commotion to find a way across the breach, either by plank or rope. Down below he would have no hope of fleeing his captors.

The panel opened once again.

"Sutherland, ye doona look well," MacCreary snickered.

"What do you want from me?" Edward asked.

"Nothing at all, but if ye've anything ye'd like to give me, I'll take it." He chuckled again, obviously thinking himself amusing.

"You already know I have nothing with me, but if you allow me to join you above deck, I think I have information that you would want."

"What information would that be?" MacCreary seemed mildly interested.

"I can't share it all with you, but I'm sure you'd like to know where Christopher Plumb's treasure is buried."

MacCreary laughed at this. "I would and I'm sure ye would, as well."

Sutherland could tell MacCreary wasn't about to fall for this ploy. "I already know where it is hidden."

"How?" MacCreary grumbled.

Edward couldn't see his face, but he could tell MacCreary's interest had been piqued. "As unbelievable as it may seem, I've visited the future and met a descendent of Captain Plumb. They had the map."

"But ye doona."

Surprisingly MacCreary didn't question Edward's claim of future travel. "Not with me, but I can get it."

“Sutherland, do ye take me for a fool? I fell for the story that Mackall’s woman told me about the future. I will not fall for it again. Ye must think me daft.”

“Well, now that you speak of it,” Edward said, knowing it would get under the man’s skin.

“Bah!” MacCreary shouted.

“Cap’n there’s a ship bearing down on us.” One of MacCreary’s men could be heard rushing towards them.

“Is it *The Dagger*?” MacCreary asked, sounding hopeful.

“I can no’ tell. ’Tis no’ flying a flag,” the man replied.

“Damn it.” MacCreary said.

“Isn’t that what you wanted?” Edward asked.

“If ’tis *The Dagger*, aye. I must leave ye. Do no’ miss me. I’ll return for ye.”

Edward didn’t like the sound of that. What was to stop MacCreary from killing as many of *The Dagger*’s crew as possible? Had Jameson returned, or was the crew of *The Dagger* on a rescue mission without their captain?

Chapter 12

A skiff was lowered into the water which was thankfully glasslike and still on this cloudless night. Susanna noted that the moon was only a sliver in the dark sky, which she hoped would be beneficial in hiding them from sight.

Samuel and some of the other crewmen helped the women, who were now dressed in men's breeches borrowed from the crew, into the small boat before rowing their way towards *The Savage Wolf*. Each man rowed in unison so that they silently sped through the water at a fast clip.

The Dagger was swiftly closing in on MacCreary's ship on the port side. As the skiff approached from the starboard side they could clearly make out movement aboard *The Savage Wolf*. With any luck, all attention would be on *The Dagger* giving them time to climb aboard without being seen.

The skiff glided to a stop alongside the ship.

"How are we going to get up there?" Addie asked in a loud whisper.

"I've brought a ladder," Samuel said, positioning it just below some netting that would aid in their climb.

"This is scarier than I imagined," Susanna said, gazing up to the top of the rail. "At least no one's up there."

Samuel climbed up to the top of the ladder and clasped onto the rope netting above. Susanna was first up. He held a hand out to help her and once she made it past him, she latched onto the netting and used it like a ladder to get to the top. All those times she'd climbed rock walls at the gym were paying off big time. Addie and Lady Charlotte were right behind her.

Susanna peeked over the rail, everyone was on the port side as *The Dagger* swooped into view. Men leaped from one ship to the other. She blocked the sounds of battle from her mind as she got her bearings and climbed on deck. The others followed.

"Where would they be keeping him?" Addie asked Samuel.

"Below deck. Follow me." He led them along the deck and out of sight. "Down here."

"Samuel you stay here and keep watch."

"I..." he started to speak.

"I know what you're thinking, but we can handle ourselves," Susanna assured him.

"Do you have the weapons Hawes gave you?"

"Yes. I hope we won't need them." She had no idea how to use the gun he'd given her and as for the knife, it gave her the chills just thinking about it.

"Go as far below deck as you can go. There should be a cell there for prisoners. Hopefully it's not being guarded." The expression on his face told of his doubts. "Addie, please be careful."

"I will. Try not to worry. I've got a black belt in karate," she said with pride.

"He doesn't know what that is," Susanna said, grabbing her hand and pulling her along behind as she made her way down the dark wooden steps that led below. "I could sure use a flashlight."

"Or a candle," Addie said.

"Are you alright, Lady Charlotte?" Susanna asked. She hadn't heard a peep out of the woman since they left *The Dagger*.

"I'm fine. Please call me Charlotte."

"Well, Charlotte, I bet you never thought you'd be doing this."

"And neither did you," she replied.

They reached the lowest depths of the ship. It was damp and pitch black.

"How are we ever going to find him?" Charlotte asked.

"Edward!" Susanna called out.

"Shhh!" Addie said. "Someone might hear us."

"There's no one down here, except for that guy right there."

In the dim light up ahead, they saw a giant of a man heading right for them with a lantern in hand.

"Oh, no!" Susanna said.

"Don't worry. I've got this." Addie launched herself at the man, who must have been shocked at her speed and the punches and kicks she was landing. Susanna picked up the lantern that had fallen from the man's hand and placed it on a nearby hook.

"Come on, Charlotte. We should help if we can." Susanna pulled the flintlock from her belt and pointed it at the man. "Addie, get back."

Addie moved far enough away to be out of the man's reach. He was leaning heavily on the wall, gasping for breath. "Sir. I will shoot you if I must. Is Edward Sutherland here?"

"I'm here. Susanna, is that you?" The surprise in his voice was worth everything in that moment.

"Yes. It is. I'm here with Addie and Charlotte." She never took her

eyes off the man and now the other women were also pointing their pistols at him. "Open the door."

He did as she asked. The door opened to reveal Edward ready and waiting. He wrapped an arm around the man's neck and propelled him back into the cell, where he shoved him down to the ground. Exiting the prison, he closed and locked the door behind him.

"Come on. We don't have a lot of time," Susanna said.

"I'll take that if you don't mind," Edward took the pistol from her hand.

She gladly relinquished her hold on the gun. "I don't mind at all. Let's get out of here."

They hurried back the way they'd come, with Edward in the lead. Once they were back up on deck, they stopped to get their bearings. The sounds of clashing swords, followed by shouts and groans were growing louder. Susanna couldn't believe it, they had actually staged a rescue operation on a pirate ship! They only had to get down to the skiff and Edward would be safe.

"Where's Samuel?" Addie asked, sounding worried. "He was right here."

"If ye're lookin' fer yer man, he's here." A dangerous looking man was holding Samuel with a gun to his head.

"Please. Don't hurt him." Addie said. All of the joy Susanna had felt a moment ago disappeared. She grabbed for her friend's hand, uncertain which one of them she was trying to comfort.

"I'll trade ye. I'll give ye this one for Sutherland."

"MacCreary." Edward said through gritted teeth.

"Drop yer weapons, all of ye."

They did as he asked, dropping them to the deck.

"Go and join yer friends," he said, shoving Samuel in their direction. "Now, Sutherland, I think I've waited long enough. Mackall is no' aboard *The Dagger*."

"It's after midnight," Addie said. "It has to be the thirtieth."

Susanna wondered if this was how it was supposed to end all along. Had she somehow played into the hands of fate by coming up with this rescue plan?

As MacCreary raised his pistol towards Edward, time seemed to move in slow motion.

"No!" Susanna yelled, throwing herself at Edward as Samuel dove for the guns on deck.

He tossed one to Addie and Charlotte, keeping one that he aimed at MacCreary.

A shot rang out as Susanna shoved Edward backwards and over the rail. As they fell she heard another shot and looked up to see her friends and Samuel staring down at them as they plunged into the sea.

She knew she hadn't been shot, but feared Edward may have been.

"Edward! Are you shot?" she asked, gulping air and trying to keep her head above water.

A strong arm wrapped around her, pulling her close and dragging her slowly towards the skiff. Addie, Charlotte and Samuel scrambled down to the small boat and helped pull both Edward and Susanna out of the water. Edward collapsed, eyes closed once on board.

"Edward!" Susanna was checking him from head to toe for a gunshot wound.

"Susanna." Edward opened his eyes. "I'm not shot. He missed us both thanks to your timely shove. You could have been killed you know."

Tears of relief rolled down her cheeks as she hugged and held onto him. "I thought *I* was going to be the cause of *you* dying."

"The night is young," he teased.

"Stop it," she slapped at his arm.

"Thank you for saving me." He drew her face down to his, kissing her.

"The men will never let you live this one down," Samuel said.

"I'm sure they won't," Edward agreed.

"How are we going to get back aboard *The Dagger*?" Addie asked.

"That's not for you to worry about," Samuel said. "The men know what to do."

"Did you shoot MacCreary?" Edward asked.

"I did," Samuel said.

"So you're good at something other than map making." Edward teased.

"Well, at least I didn't need three women to rescue me." It seemed Samuel was going to give it right back to him. Susanna couldn't help but laugh.

"It starts so soon." Edward said.

"Hey, women are capable you know," Addie piped up.

"I'm sorry, Addie. I know you are," Samuel said, grasping her hand and bringing it to his lips. She seemed quite taken aback by this gesture.

"Lady Charlotte, I'm surprised to see you here," Edward said.

"You shouldn't be. I think of you as my son, just as I do Jameson. The difference being that *you*, are the son who causes me the most worry."

Edward laughed heartily at her comment. "So I am the black sheep, am I?"

Charlotte raised an eyebrow, giving him a stern look, followed by a slowly warming smile. "I do love you, Edward."

"And I you," he took her hand, kissing it.

The men steered the skiff around *The Savage Wolf* and came up on the port side of *The Dagger* where a rope ladder was lowered for them.

Once they were all safely aboard and the skiff had been raised, Hawes let out a long, loud whistle which was a signal to the men to end the fighting and get back aboard.

“How’d we do?” Edward asked Hawes.

“No losses, sir,” Hawes reported.

“Let’s get out of here then.”

Edward hurried the women to Jameson’s cabin where they would be safe until they had disengaged from *The Savage Wolf* and were on their way back to St. George’s.

“Do you think MacCreary is dead?” Susanna asked.

“It’s doubtful. Over the years the man has escaped death more times than can be counted. Nothing seems to keep him down for long. I’m sure we’ll see him again and when we do he’ll have even more reason to want us dead.”

“That’s not good,” Susanna said. Their worries weren’t even close to over. Not as long as Domnhaill MacCreary was alive.

“What happens now?” Addie asked.

“We’re heading back to St. George’s. We’ll wait for Jameson and Danielle to return and then we’ve a treasure to find.”

“That’s exactly what I was hoping you’d say,” Addie gushed.

Susanna loved Addie’s exuberance. When she was excited about something, you could feel it. And it was clear she was excited about this treasure hunt.

Early the next morning *The Dagger* arrived in port. The crew saw

to it that the ship was tied up at the dock before Edward and the others disembarked.

“Where were you with my ship, Sutherland?” Jameson Mackall was standing on the dock waiting for them. “And where were you before that? We’ve been looking all over for you.”

Edward was about to answer when shrieks of joy emanated from behind Edward and beside Jameson. The men stood aside as Susanna rushed past and straight into the arms of Danielle York. The two women held each other close. Loud sobs came from them and it was a good long time before they finally let go and looked at each other.

“Danielle, you really are alive.” Susanna held Danielle at arm’s

length seeming to examine her to make sure she was real.

“Did you get my letter?” Danielle asked.

“I did. Edward brought it to me.”

Danielle and Jameson looked at each other and then at Edward. “Is that where you were?”

He chuckled and shook his head. “I thought you might have figured that out by now. Yes. I time traveled to the future. It’s a long story and one I have no patience to tell right now.”

Danielle looked past Susanna. “Addie, is that you?”

“It sure is,” she answered, joining the women for another round of hugs.

“Is no one surprised to see me?” Charlotte asked, hands on her hips.

“I don’t believe I’ve ever seen you in breeches,” Jameson observed.

“It was necessary in order to save Edward,” she replied apparently very proud of herself.

“I’m sorry. You saved Edward?” Danielle asked, disengaging herself from her friends.

“We did.” Charlotte indicated Susanna and Addie.

“Oh, my. This is going to be quite a story. I can’t wait to hear it,” Danielle said.

“Shall we head back to my home?” Charlotte asked.

Edward couldn’t help but smile at all the happiness he saw before him. Susanna caught his eye and he beckoned her to join him. He wrapped an arm around her shoulders and was pleased when she placed a sweet kiss on his lips. “I’m happy to be alive.”

“I’m happy you’re alive, too.”

“What’s this I see?” Danielle asked, eyeing the two of them.

“Did you not think we would be good together?” Edward asked.

Danielle laughed and poked Jameson who took her hand and began walking. The others followed along behind. The mood of the group couldn’t have been better.

Edward was relieved that the thirtieth was almost over and he was still in one piece. He had no worries about MacCreary coming for him now, but there was no telling what the future might hold for any of them.

“More tea, Ma’am?” Harold asked.

"No, thank you. I believe we've all had enough," Lady Charlotte said.

The group were all in the sitting room and having enjoyed tea and cakes while sharing their stories, Susanna felt a great sense of relief. She'd done what she'd set out to do. She'd made sure Edward didn't die and she'd been reunited with Danielle, who was alive and well and seemingly very happy. The only thing left on the 'to do list' was finding Christopher Plumb's treasure.

They had spent the day exchanging stories of their time traveling adventures, as well as all of the information they had about Christopher Plumb's treasure, with Jameson. He and Edward were making plans to sail to Charleston. Thanks to Addie they had the map and the coordinates.

"I don't understand how we're going to find it," Susanna said. "I'm sure the roads we took out of Charleston aren't there now."

"Samuel will pinpoint the location for us. He's an excellent cartographer," Jameson said.

"I'll see that he gets a copy of this map and Addie, if you can give him the information you have, I believe he'll get us there," Edward said.

"I believe I'll stay right here at home," Charlotte said. "One adventure is more than enough for me."

"Are you sure?" Susanna asked.

"Yes. I'm not as young as all of you. I prefer to sleep in my own bed."

"We'll miss you," Danielle said.

"You'll be back. With a treasure I hope. We'll celebrate when you return."

"When will we leave?" Susanna asked.

"Tomorrow morning at first light." Jameson said.

"No one here likes to sleep in I take it?" Susanna glanced around to see that the men had no idea what she meant.

"Without electricity, it's best to make use of daylight. So sunrise to sunset," Danielle explained.

"I'm exhausted," Susanna said. "It's been a long couple of days."

"I'll walk you up to your room. Come on Addie, join us. We can catch up a bit more before you fall asleep."

"Good night. See you bright and early tomorrow morning," Susanna said, wishing it was Edward taking her up to bed.

Once upstairs, Susanna stripped down to her shift and climbed into bed. Danielle sat on the edge of the bed and Addie decided she couldn't keep her eyes open a second longer and left them to go to her own room.

"It's so good to see you," Danielle said.

“You have no idea how awful it was when I thought you were dead. I went into a deep, dark funk and couldn’t pull myself out of it.”

Danielle reached for her hand. It meant everything to Susanna that she had found her. “I’m sorry. I didn’t want you to worry about me.”

“It wasn’t your fault. Morwenna said to blame the Triangle. Who knew that was even really true?”

“If there was a way I could have gotten a message to you sooner, you know I would have.”

“I closed the business.” There, she said it. “It was the hardest decision I’ve ever made, but I couldn’t go on without you.”

“Susanna, you are more than capable of running any business on your own. You don’t need me.”

“But that was *our* business. I just couldn’t do it without you.”

“I get it.” Danielle stood and picked up a brush from a side table. “Let me brush your hair. It’s one of the things I’ve got plenty of time for now.”

She softly brushed all of the tangles out of Susanna’s hair before braiding it and tying it with a ribbon.

“Thanks. Who knew I’d have to come all the way to 1724 to get my own personal hair stylist?”

“It’s just a braid, silly. Hey, how are your parents?”

“They’re fine. They were out of town when I left to come here so I just left them a quick message.”

“Where do they think you are?”

“I never told them where I was going. I couldn’t exactly say I was going to the eighteenth century. See you when I get back.”

Danielle laughed at that. “Probably not. So what’s going on with you and Edward?”

“I’m not sure,” Susanna said. It wasn’t really a lie because anything was possible as she’d found out recently. “I really like him.”

“I knew you would.”

“The only problem is you can’t be a matchmaker for people who don’t even live in the same century.”

“Who says? I think I did a pretty good job.”

“I’m not staying, Danielle. I just wanted to make sure you were really alive and that you are happy here.”

Danielle nodded and looked away. Susanna couldn’t help but notice there was a tear in her eye. “I couldn’t be happier. I love Jameson, more than I thought it was possible to love another human being.” When she turned back, the tear was gone and there was a soft smile in its place. “I’m glad I stayed. I had my chance to leave and I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t leave him.”

“I’m happy for you. Are you going to get married?”

“Definitely. We’re planning a wedding soon. Charlotte is helping us

with all of the arrangements. I wish you could stay for it, but I don't think it's going to be until around the holidays."

"I'll be thinking of you then. There should be some way that we can time travel back and forth without it being a big issue. You know, kind of like getting on the subway to go from one place to the next."

"Who do we talk to about arranging that?"

Susanna laughed. "Crazier things have happened."

"I should let you get some sleep. The morning comes a lot sooner than you'd like."

"Yes. We've got an adventure to go on."

Chapter 13

The deck of *The Dagger* was buzzing with men going about their duties. Susanna Cole stood at the bow, feeling the ocean spray and a warm sea breeze hit her face.

"This is wonderful," she said. "I feel so free. Not a care in the world. Why can't life be like this all the time?"

Edward Sutherland stood behind her, his arms wrapped around her waist. "It is like this all the time for me and it can be for you as well."

"Edward I'm not going to live in the eighteenth century," Susanna reminded him with a sigh. "I like my creature comforts way too much to give them up."

He harrumphed in her ear, causing her to giggle. "I will not give up trying to convince you that you belong here with me."

"I love your determination, but I'm not easy to persuade. Ask Danielle. She'll tell you that not once in all the years that she's known me has she been able to convince me to do something once I've made up my mind not to."

"There is always a first time," Edward said. He nuzzled her neck with his nose before tracing a line from her collar to her ear with his tongue, causing a shiver of delight to erupt. She tipped her head to the side, exposing more of her neck for him to explore with his lips. Edward's attention to the tender spot beneath her ear with his soft kisses and warm breath set an involuntary moan loose from her lips.

He spun her in his arms, his lips quickly covering hers as she clung to him savoring this moment. They hadn't been alone at all since arriving in Bermuda and so stolen moments like this one were all they had. The sexual tension between them was building to a boiling point. If they didn't have some privacy soon, Susanna was sure she would embarrass herself somehow in front of everyone.

"Hey, you two," Danielle said, approaching them. "You've got the crew all buzzing about what you're up to."

I guess I've already embarrassed myself, Susanna thought. "Danielle, hi!" She peeled herself off of Edward who was wearing a smug grin, delighting in what he was doing to her. Susanna rolled her eyes at him.

Edward laughed. "If you ladies will excuse me, I'm sure Jameson needs me for something." He walked away with his typical Edward swagger, which Susanna was finding irresistible.

"I'd tell you to get a room, but I know that's not possible," Danielle giggled.

"Very funny, coming from someone who has the door to the captain's quarters locked ninety percent of the day."

"Jameson can't just have the men walking in any time they like. He's a busy man," Danielle protested.

"I'll bet he is." Susanna grumbled.

They were on their way to Charleston and from there to search for Christopher Plumb's buried treasure. Another adventure to add to the many she'd experienced since meeting Edward.

"I just thought you'd like to know we'll be docking the ship tomorrow in Charleston. We'll get rooms at the inn, if you know what I mean."

Susanna didn't answer her. She was secretly delighting in the knowledge that she'd have Edward alone in a room of their own.

"What are you going to do when this is all over?" Danielle asked.

"What do you mean?" Susanna knew exactly what she meant, she was being purposely obtuse.

"I'm guessing that after we find the treasure you'll have a big decision to make." Danielle tipped her head, giving Susanna one of those looks that was all too familiar.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, but the only decision I'll have to make is about how quickly to get back home."

"So you're really not going to stay?" Danielle asked.

"I told you, I can't."

"You can do anything you want to. That's something I've discovered since being thrown into the ocean that night."

"Believe me, I've thought about it...a lot. I have to go back. I wasn't cut out to live in this time. And I've got my parents to think about. I couldn't do that to them. They'd have no idea what happened to me. I'd end up on one of those missing persons shows on television."

"That's a very good reason to go back, but what about Edward?" Danielle asked.

"He knows," she said.

"I think he's hoping he can get you to stay."

“I appreciate what you’re saying. I really do. It’s going to be

hard to say goodbye, but it’s for the best. He’d be miserable in our time.” Susanna had tried to imagine Edward with her in New York. He’d definitely be a fish out of water, but she could teach him all the things he’d need to know

Danielle was shaking her head ‘no’ the whole time Susanna was talking. “Edward Sutherland is a man who loves a good adventure and living in the future with you would be categorized as a good adventure, don’t you think?”

“I don’t know. Seems iffy to me. What if he hates it there?” Susanna asked. She had fantasized about Edward living with her in New York, but a fantasy was all it would ever be. Edward loved his life in his own time, especially the freedom of living the life of a pirate.

“Then he comes back.”

“What if he can’t?”

“Why wouldn’t he be able to? I could go back if I wanted to. Morwenna gave me a stone.”

“About that, I think Edward lost it.”

“What?”

“When he traveled. The stone got him to the future, but when he got there he didn’t have it anymore. Morwenna asked him about it. She was pretty peeved that it was gone.”

“I don’t believe it.” Danielle turned and marched off leaving Susanna no other choice but to follow.

They headed straight to Jameson’s cabin. Danielle opened the door, surprising Jameson and Edward who stood with their heads together going over the map.

“Edward did you lose my stone?” Danielle demanded as she stormed across the room and stood within inches of him.

Edward backed away from her, holding up his hands in surrender. “My apologies. I had no idea what it was.”

“He didn’t lose it, love. ’Tis here.” Jameson opened one of the desk drawers and pulled the stone out.

Danielle’s relief was evident as her shoulders relaxed and the tension in her face eased.

Jameson placed the stone back in the desk. “Why do you need it? Are you leaving me?” His voice was filled with concern.

Danielle wheedled her way in between the two men to caress Jameson’s face. Her voice softened as she spoke. “No. Of course not.

It's just that it's my stone. Morwenna gave it to me and if I ever want to go visit Susanna, I'll need it."

"It would get you there," Susanna said. "But since it seems that the stone stays here in this time, getting back might be a problem."

"You did it," Danielle pointed out.

"Yes, but it all depended on finding Morwenna and her agreeing to let us come back with Edward." Susanna couldn't believe Danielle thought it was that easy to travel through time.

"She really pulled the wool over your eyes. Morwenna knows how to send people through time. She's been doing it for hundreds of years. Now, she could refuse to do it, but I really don't think she would." Danielle stood behind Jameson, rubbing his shoulders as he leaned back to gaze up at her with adoration.

"Good to know," Susanna said, gazing at Edward who seemed relieved that the stone had been found. She wanted more than anything to have what Danielle had with Jameson.

"We were just going over the map," Jameson said.

"We'll be in Charleston first thing in the morning. We'll spend the day there. The ship needs to be stocked for our return voyage, I've asked Hawes to oversee that," Edward said.

It was clear Edward was in his element here aboard *The Dagger*. She didn't think she could ask him to give that up and she wasn't sure he would want to even if she did ask.

"Then the following morning we'll head off in search of the treasure," Jameson said.

"Speaking of which, where's Addie?" Danielle wondered.

Jameson chuckled. "She's with Samuel. It seems she's fascinated with his knowledge of *maps*."

"A boring topic in my opinion," Edward said.

"Not to her. She loves that kind of thing," Susanna said. "Besides, I think she's got a thing for Samuel."

"What thing?" Edward asked.

"It's another one of those expressions you don't understand. It means she likes him," Susanna explained.

"Why didn't you just say that then?" One eyebrow shot up as he tipped his head in question.

Susanna eyed Danielle. "The explaining never stops."

"No it doesn't. At least it hasn't yet." Danielle planted a kiss on Jameson's cheek. "It works both ways though. There are a lot of things I don't understand either."

"I'm excited to see Charleston tomorrow. I just made my first trip there before coming to this time and I really loved it. I'm curious to see how different it is from future Charleston." The thought of hunting for treasure and exploring Charleston were thrilling to her. Doing it

with Edward was the icing on the cake. Of course, the thought of alone time at the inn trumped all of those other things.

"There are differences," Edward said. "Much of it seems similar, but it's hard to say, after having seen it with all the cars and electric lights."

"It seems as though you'd want to see more," Danielle said, sneaking a peek at Susanna.

"My time there was short, but my place is here." He looked pointedly at Susanna.

Susanna gave Danielle an I-told-you-so look.

Danielle shrugged her shoulders and walked around to take Susanna by the arm. "We'll leave you two to plot out the future."

Two confused men stared after them as they left the cabin and closed the door.

Susanna plopped down on the bench of the quarter deck. The ship sliced through the waves with ease, moving faster than she thought imaginable.

"Hey, I haven't given up on the idea of Edward joining you when you go home. You shouldn't either," Danielle said, poking her in the ribs.

"I'm just taking this a day at a time. If it works out I'll be ecstatic, but I'm trying to be realistic so I won't be disappointed when it doesn't."

"That's not the Susanna I know and love. You've never had a defeatist attitude in all the years we've been friends. If anything, you were always the one with the positive attitude when I was being a negative Nelly."

"Yeah, well I've grown up I guess. I don't see things in quite the same way as I used to. Losing my best friend was one of the hardest things I've ever had to go through. I thought you were dead. I was so depressed that I set the ball in motion to shut down the business. I thought I couldn't do it without you, but traveling through time and coming here, saving Edward's life...it made me realize I am capable of anything I set my mind to."

"But you didn't lose me. I'm right here." Danielle framed her face with her hands.

"I know that now, but you're still three hundred years away. Life is different. I don't know if I want to start over with the business and do it on my own. I don't even know if I want to stay in New York."

"I'm sorry I left you in the lurch. None of this was anything I planned, you know that, don't you?"

"I do. I'm sorry. I don't want you to feel bad. I'm happy for you. The most important thing to me is that you are alive and you've found happiness with Jameson."

“I want you to be happy, too.” Danielle gave Susanna’s hand a squeeze. “Listen, about the business, wanting to do it and being able to do it are two different things. You are certainly more than capable, but just because you can doesn’t mean you should.” Danielle wrapped her arm around her friend and Susanna rested her head on Danielle’s shoulder.

“Look at the two of them, Susanna said, pointing to the main deck where Addie and Samuel were laughing about something they found funny. She lifted her head and a smile lit her face.

“It looks like Addie may end up having the same dilemma as you.”

“I hope not. It is nice to see her enjoying herself so much instead of having her nose in her phone or computer.”

Danielle repositioned herself on the bench to face Susanna. “It’s amazing what we miss and don’t miss. That’s one thing I’ve learned being here with Jameson. I don’t have to check my phone or emails one hundred times a day. There’s no rush to get back to someone who sends me a text and gets antsy because there’s no immediate response. I don’t need those things and you know what, I feel less anxiety and less stress.”

“I hadn’t thought about that, but you’re right. That’s one thing I might change when I get back to the real world.”

“Real world? What do you think this is?” Danielle asked feigning insult.

“The *very* real world.” Susanna laughed and Danielle joined her.

“All the obstacles life threw at me over the years were preparation for what I went through. I realized I’m a survivor. If I could stay afloat for hours, get rescued by pirates, avoid getting killed and then fall in love, I can do almost anything I set my mind to. You’re in a position to do the same. Don’t let anything stop you.”

“I’ve missed you,” Susanna said. “Since we both can do anything, we need to find a way to still see each other and talk to each other. I can’t imagine my life without you.”

“Let’s put that on our ‘to do list’ and then ‘to do’ the heck out of it,” Danielle said, her mouth turning up into a quirky smile.

“Agreed.” Susanna hoped they could do all of the things they wanted to. If Danielle was right, then they would, but life never stopped placing obstacles in the way and she wasn’t sure she had the energy to jump over all of them.

Chapter 14

“Oh, Charleston! Whether past or future, you’re a beautiful city.” Susanna stepped onto the dock and hooked her arm through Edward’s. “It really looks very similar. All the old buildings are here. Well, they’re not old now, but in my time they are. I’d love to see the tavern you took me to.”

“We’ll see. The clientele are definitely not the sort you’ll want to spend time with. I think Jameson and Danielle have plans for us.”

“They do? What are they? Where are we going?”

Edward couldn’t help but laugh. “You seem very excited this morning.”

“I am. It will be nice to sleep in a real bed tonight.”

“I understand.” Edward slept where he always slept, in a hammock below deck with the others. Susanna had the luxury of sleeping in Jameson’s cabin with Danielle. He knew Jameson would be happy when that arrangement had ended and he could have his cabin and his woman back. “We’re headed for the inn now.”

“Will we have breakfast? I’m hungry.”

“We will. I’ll see to it,” Edward assured her.

Susanna’s eyes twinkled and her face glowed as she gazed up at him. Edward wasn’t sure if it was the promise of food or he himself that caused her to look on him that way.

Over his shoulder he spied Addie and Samuel engaged in conversation. Their discourse was very animated and at one point Samuel placed a hand on her cheek, lovingly capturing a lock of hair that the wind had blown across her face and settling it behind her ear. He thought how sweet Samuel was with her. He immediately wondered what had become of Edward Sutherland, womanizing pirate, that he would think something sweet. This was the effect Susanna was having on him. He was becoming soft and worse yet, he was enjoying it.

“I love all the colors,” Susanna said as they passed the rainbow hued houses on the road leading to the inn. “They’re so pretty.”

“Not as pretty as you,” Edward noted. He’d said it often enough to other women, but this time he meant it. Susanna was, to him, the

most beautiful woman he'd ever known.

"Thank you. I'm happy to hear I'm prettier than a house," she teased, before becoming serious. "Edward, if we find the treasure, will it be enough for you to retire?"

"I don't know. It will depend on the treasure. It is always divided among the crew, but if it's a large treasure then very possibly."

"I'd like to take something back to Christopher, if that's alright. Maybe that golden hook if we find it."

He thought about it for a minute and couldn't find any reason she shouldn't. "It would be a good thing to do."

"I know he'd be very appreciative." Susanna held tight to his arm as they walked.

"Even if it's only a small bit of treasure?" Edward asked, feeling he was the envy of every man they passed along the street.

"I don't think he would care about the monetary value. I think he cares about the history and what it means to his family. I believe it would become a family heirloom, not something he would cash in."

"What would you do with your portion?" Edward asked.

"My portion?"

"Yes. You are very much a part of this treasure hunt, Susanna. You deserve a cut as does Addie and every man aboard *The Dagger*."

"Wow! I hadn't thought about it at all. I don't really know what I'd do with it. Maybe I'd give it to you. So you could retire."

"That's very sweet of you, but I'm sure there must be something you need or want."

"I've always wanted to travel more, but I haven't been able to because of the business. Maybe I'd do that."

Edward wanted Susanna to be happy. He hoped that whatever they found would give her those things her heart desired.

Reaching the inn, they entered a small lobby area through the large double doors and were greeted by the owner. "Jameson Mackall. So good to see you again."

"We need rooms for a night or two," Jameson said.

"Six then?" the man asked, sizing up the group.

"I'm going back to the ship," Samuel said, "so I won't need a room."

"Nonsense, Samuel. You'll stay here tonight. We're going to need you first thing in the morning," Edward said.

"My wife will be staying with me," Jameson said indicating Danielle.

"Any other wives in the group," the man asked and when no one answered. "No. Five rooms then."

"That will be fine," Jameson said.

"We are serving breakfast in the dining room. I'll make sure your

rooms are ready while you eat.”

The man showed them into the dining room which was brightly lit by the sun shining in through the many open French doors along the side and back wall. They sat in green damask chairs surrounding a large round table.

“Enjoy your meal,” the man said as he left the room.

“Samuel, you brought your maps with you?” Jameson asked.

“I’ve got them right here.” He indicated a bag he’d carried slung over his shoulder.

“What do we need those for? We brought a map,” Susanna said.

“I’ve maps of the area. Tonight I’ll set them out along with the map you brought. Comparing them all I should be able to locate what we’re looking for.”

“Will it be a large area?” Danielle asked.

“It will be the exact spot,” Samuel assured them with what some might see as arrogant confidence.

“He’s right. He showed me how he does it and I believe if anyone can locate the exact spot, it’s Samuel,” Addie said. Her admiration for the man was evident not only in her words, but in the way she gazed at him and touched his shoulder.

Breakfast was brought to the table on a large platter. There was ham, bread, bannocks and cornmeal mush. Pitchers of beer and cider were placed on the table, along with a pot of tea and milk.

“This is interesting,” Susanna said, helping herself to the bannocks.

“Not like food in New York, is it?” Danielle spooned some cornmeal mush into a bowl and topped it with milk and a dribble of molasses.

“How is that?” Susanna asked.

“Good. You’d like it.”

Edward handed her a bowl he’d put together for her.

“Thanks.” She took a spoonful and smiled “Danielle you were right. I like it.”

“May I pour you some ale?” Edward asked.

“Tea, please. I can’t imagine drinking ale so early in the morning.”

“As you wish.” Edward poured the tea for her, leaving it up to her to sweeten it if she wished.

When they had all eaten enough to last them an entire day, they set off to explore Charleston. Everyone but Susanna and Addie had already been there in this time. Danielle and Jameson went off to visit some shops. Addie and Samuel had their sights set on the beach.

“Where would you like to go?” Edward asked.

“Wherever you go when you come here,” Susanna said.

Edward thought about that for a minute. “You wanted to see the tavern. We can walk by if you like.”

“Can we go in?” she asked.

“It would be best to stay outside.” When in port he usually stopped at the tavern where he indulged in behavior he did not wish to share with Susanna as he didn’t wish to diminish her opinion of him.

“Edward, I’m not a prude. I know what goes on in *taverns* in your time.”

Edward relaxed a bit. Susanna would not hold his past behavior against him. What had he been thinking? She was truly made of stronger stuff than he was used to. After all, she had saved him from certain death, had she not?

It was a short walk from the inn. Just down the road and around the corner. Having Susanna by his side was a pleasure Edward hadn’t expected. As far as he could remember he hadn’t ever escorted a lady around town, but then he’d never wanted to.

As they approached the tavern, Edward stopped a good distance away. “There it is.”

“Let’s go in. I want to see what it looks like on the inside.”

“I told you what it looks like,” he said. “Remember when we ate there in your time?”

“Yes, but I want to see it with my own eyes. Please?”

She was unrelenting, but how could he say no to her? He was about to give in and took one step towards the tavern when the door opened and a man was thrown out onto the street with the admonition that he should never return.

“Maybe we shouldn’t go in.” Susanna’s eyes were wide with surprise.

“You’re a wise woman.” Edward led her away. “Shopping?” he asked. He had yet to meet a woman who didn’t love to shop and he would like to buy her a small token to remember him by.

“Yes,” she replied with enthusiasm. “I’d love that.”

They walked towards King Street and spotted Jameson and Danielle coming out of a nearby shop.

“It is sweltering,” Susanna said, as they approached. “It’s hot enough for shorts. These dresses are not great for this weather.”

“I’d have to agree, but this is the fashion of the day,” Danielle said.

“Shall we go in this shop?” Edward suggested. “It will at least get you out of the sun.”

“Yes, please,” Susanna followed him into the small store and began looking around.

Edward pulled Danielle aside. “I’d like to get something for Susanna. A surprise.”

“A piece of jewelry would be nice,” Danielle said. She turned to the clerk. “Do you have any pretty necklaces?”

The man held up a finger before turning his back to them. When

he turned around he had a tray with several items on it. Edward turned to see that Jameson was keeping Susanna occupied so that he could make his purchase without her being aware.

Next, the clerk showed him a broach. "She wouldn't like that," Danielle said.

"What about this? Yes. I think this is perfect," Edward said, holding up a beautiful heart-shaped amethyst ring for Danielle to see. It was set in a band made up of Celtic knots.

"She'll love it. Let me try it on. If it fits me, it will fit her." She slid it on her ring finger. "Perfect."

"I'll take it," Edward said, beaming at his good fortune. He paid the man and was waiting for it to be wrapped, when Danielle elbowed him.

"She's coming," Danielle said. "I'll wait for it. Go."

"Did you see anything you liked?" Edward asked before she got too close.

"So many beautiful things. It's funny. I look at them and I see antiques, but they're new. I don't know if I'd ever get used to that."

Danielle bumped into him as she passed, slyly placing the ring in his pocket.

He was still wearing the happy smile from his purchase as he gazed at Susanna.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" she asked through narrowed eyes.

"No reason. I'm happy is all."

"I'm happy you're happy," she giggled.

"Shall we go back to the inn?" He wanted more than anything to be alone with her.

"What do you have in mind?" she asked, giving him a look that said she knew exactly what he had in mind.

"I think you know."

"You don't have to ask me twice."

Much to Edward's surprise, Susanna took hold of his arm and guided him from the shop.

"We'll see you two later." She waved over her shoulder at Jameson and Danielle.

Susanna's wish was coming true. Alone time with Edward had

been a long time coming. All those stolen moments aboard *The Dagger* had left her wanting so much more. They had great chemistry, there was no doubt about that, but there was more to it. Edward was sweet, kind, funny and the kind of man she'd spent most of her adult life looking for. It's what made this all so bittersweet. She was getting what she wanted, but only for a very little while.

Her room at the inn was beautifully decorated. The four-poster bed was dressed in ecru lace bedding with a matching canopy. Susanna hardly had time to take it all in before she found herself being pulled into Edward's arms where she enjoyed sweet and passionate kisses. She unbuttoned his leather jerkin, pushing it back off of his shoulders. Edward pulled his linen shirt over his head, leaving it to fall to the floor.

Running her hands across his chest, her fingers scrubbed through the light dusting of hair tracing it downward to his breeches. Edward caught her hand in his, bringing it up to his lips where he kissed each of her fingers.

"I'm going to need some help with my clothes. Addie and I have been helping each other in and out of them."

Edward unpinned her gown from her stomach, setting the pins on the dresser and the gown on a chair. He slowly spun her around to undo the laces of her stays and then off came all the petticoats, which he again neatly set on the chair. "You seem to know what you're doing," she teased.

"I've undressed a woman or two in my day," he replied while leading her to sit on the edge of the bed. Edward knelt before her, taking her leg in his hands and untying the ribbon garter that held her stockings in place before slowly rolling them down each leg, kissing the toes of each foot when he'd finished.

From her position on the bed Susanna observed Edward's broad shoulders and the deep concentration on his face as he worked. Her heart swelled with emotion as her body swelled with desire. Being undressed by this man was the sexiest bit of foreplay she'd ever experienced. She lifted his head to face her. A slow, seductive smile appeared as he rose up to kiss her, gently laying her down on the bed beneath him. Her shift was all that was keeping her from feeling his skin touching hers. She lifted it over her head, tossing it aside. Edward's hands immediately went to her breasts, caressing and teasing each of them until he found the pert nubs of her nipples with his mouth.

"Edward, your breeches," Susanna said, as her hand skimmed the soft leather, searching for a way to remove them.

Quickly stripping them off, Edward repositioned himself atop Susanna.

“I’ve been wanting to do this for days,” Susanna whispered.

“Shhh...” He put his finger to his lips. “We’re doing it now.” Before she could utter another word, he kissed her again. His lips were soft on hers. Susanna let herself go. She was going to live in this moment and then the next and the next, never thinking too far ahead and always enjoying what was offered to her in a most loving and sensual way.

When Edward entered her for the first time, she welcomed him by wrapping her legs around his waist and her arms around his neck. His movements were perfection. All of her senses were heightened. Her eyes were locked onto his, so much so that she noticed the little flecks of green that dotted his hazel eyes. The scent of him, musk and the sea, was distinctly Edward and she breathed him in. The sound of his voice repeating her name as he made love to her was beautiful music to her ears. The taste of him on her lips was salty and sweet and the feel of him was as close to heaven as she thought she’d ever come. Lost in the moment she gave all of herself to him, crying out when she reached the peak she’d sought, quivering in his arms as he growled out her name in the throes of his own pleasure.

Edward rolled to the side as he caught his breath while Susanna couldn’t help but let out a small laugh of happiness. “That was amazing!”

He held his arm out for her to curl into his side, resting her head on his chest. “Yes, it was,” he replied.

Chapter 15

“Do we have to go?” Susanna rolled over on top of Edward.

“I believe we do,” Edward replied, but he made no effort to move.

“Edward!” Jameson knocked on the door. “Edward, are you up?”

“I am. I’ll be downstairs as soon as I’m dressed.”

“Good. I’d like to get an early start. We’re all waiting for you...and Susanna.”

“Oops!” Susanna gave him a quick peck on the lips and rolled out of bed. “I guess we have to go.”

“It’s a treasure hunt! An adventure, remember?”

“I do. I like the adventure we had last night,” she reminded him.

“And this morning,” Edward added.

“I couldn’t forget that.” Susanna put water in the washbasin.

Edward couldn’t help but chuckle when the cold water hit her face and she shrieked.

“Well, that woke me up,” she said, eyeing him. “You’re not moving.”

“I’m sorry. I was transfixed by the sight of you.” He threw off the covers and stood. Stretching his arms high overhead and giving Susanna a show of the body she’d been caressing until only moments ago.

“Stop that,” she protested, covering her eyes and peeking between her fingers.

Edward laughed as he gathered his clothing and began getting dressed. “We’d better hurry. Jameson doesn’t like to wait.”

“For anyone, or just you?” she asked.

“I have been known to make him wait.” He put on his boots. “There I’m ready.”

“You’re fast.” Susanna seemed to be struggling with all the layers of clothing she had to get on.

“I’ve learned to be. Here, let me help you.”

“Thank you. I’d be here all day trying to get this right.”

“Never fear. I know what I’m doing.” He fastened the last pin and tied the last knot. “Now you’re ready.” He kissed her nose.

“Well, let’s go then.”

He opened the door for her and followed her out.

The others were waiting for them downstairs. Danielle raised an eyebrow at the two of them as they made their way down.

“Good morning,” Jameson said as they reached the bottom step. “Are we all ready to go?”

“I hired a carriage to take us as far as possible. Ladies I hope you have a change of clothing with you.” Samuel said.

“I do,” Susanna said, pointing to the bag Edward was carrying over his shoulder for her.

“Me, too,” Danielle said.

“You know I do,” Addie said with a smile meant just for Samuel.

Susanna elbowed Edward in the side and gave him the same look Danielle had just given the two of them.

“I do.” Samuel gave her a sweet smile, before turning back to the others. “The carriage is right out front waiting for us.”

Samuel helped each of the ladies into the carriage where they seemed unsure about the seating arrangements.

“I assume you’ve got the maps,” Edward said.

“Yes. I spent some time last night plotting our course. I believe we’ll find it with little trouble.”

“Hopefully there won’t be any snakes,” Susanna said.

“I’ll carry you again, love,” Edward said, taking hold of her hand.

The carriage jostled along down the dirt road where in 300 years there would be pavement and a much smoother ride. Edward thought about the treasure they hoped to find. If it was as large as purported, his dream of retirement would be realized, but he couldn’t help but wonder if that was what he truly wanted. He gazed down at Susanna’s hand in his, slowly examining her fingers and thinking how lovely it would be to have Susanna to share his treasure with. She would make retirement so much more enticing.

After a long and uncomfortable ride, the carriage came to a sudden stop.

“Are we here?” Susanna asked. “This freaking heat is killing me.”

“I’ll check,” Samuel said, exiting the carriage.

Edward removed a handkerchief from his pocket and dabbed at her forehead with it before handing it to her. “You look lovely when you’re overheated, as you did last...”

Susanna put a finger to his lips, shaking her head ‘no’ before he could finish what he’d been about to say.

He chuckled enjoying her discomfort.

Samuel returned a few moments later. “This is as far as the driver can go. I’ve asked him to wait for us here.”

Susanna put her hand out to Samuel wanting to be the first one

out of the carriage. The others followed in a less rushed fashion.

"Ladies you should change into your breeches," Jameson said.

"I'm not going back in there," Susanna said. "I'll change out here." She walked around to the back of the carriage while Edward stood in such a way as to block the view of the others.

Danielle and Addie used the carriage to change. Once they were all ready, Samuel blazed the trail through thick brush, chopping as he went with his cutlass.

Jameson and Edward carried shovels. The women followed Samuel in a single file formation with the men at their back. Susanna kept her eyes peeled for snakes and other creepy crawly creatures. She'd been assured by everyone that with the amount of noise they were making they were giving every snake in the area fair warning of their approach and enough time to slither away. She shivered at the thought, but if Danielle and Addie could do this, so could she.

They reached the site she remembered from their visit with Christopher Plumb of the future. The trees that were marked on the map were small in comparison to what they'd be after three hundred years of growth.

"Are these the same trees?" Susanna asked. "Can they live that long?"

"Both the longleaf pine and the oak can live three hundred years, so I'm guessing these are the same trees we saw in our time," Addie said.

"Amazing," Danielle said.

"Christopher Plumb told us that this is where he thought the treasure would be buried," Edward said.

"So we should dig here," Samuel said, planting the tip of his shovel in the earth where the map had indicated.

"Why didn't we bring the crew with us?" Danielle said. "They would have made quick work of this."

"If we find anything we'll divide it up among the crew, but if we don't, we didn't get anyone's hopes up." Jameson began digging.

Edward and Samuel joined him.

"I wish we had shovels," Danielle said.

"Or a metal detector," Addie added.

Jameson's head popped up. "A what?"

"It's something that they have in the future that finds metal objects in the ground," Edward explained.

"That would be helpful," Jameson said, shoveling out more dirt.

"We can sift through the dirt you're digging up," Addie suggested.

"I'll just stand back here." Susanna backed away from the flying clods of dirt as they exited the hole and landed at her feet. Something long and slithery touched her neck causing her to scream and run to Edward, almost falling into the hole they were digging.

"What's wrong?" he dropped his shovel and pulled her into his arms.

"Snake!" She pointed to where she'd been standing.

Danielle was doubled over with laughter.

"What's so funny?" Susanna asked. "I could have been bitten by a poisonous snake."

"Susanna, honey, it was a vine." Danielle tugged on a long ropey strand covered with spindly green leaves. "This tickled your neck when you backed into it."

Susanna was shaking like a leaf and it took a minute before she calmed down and could accept the fact that she hadn't been in any danger at all, other than what she'd conjured up in her own mind.

"Are you all right?" Edward asked, lifting her chin with his finger and gazing into her eyes.

"I will be."

"Good." He gave her a quick peck on the lips. "Back to shoveling."

A loud thunk sounded as Samuel's shovel hit something hard. "There's something here," he said.

The men concentrated their efforts around the object he'd hit.

"It's big," Jameson said.

"Oh my gosh," Addie gushed. "We found it."

After a bit more careful digging, the top of a chest revealed itself. It seemed to be a good three feet in length and two feet wide.

"We're rich," Edward shouted, looking from Jameson to Samuel.

"Let's see what we've got first," Jameson said.

Susanna could see the excitement on the men's faces and she could feel it herself. This was something that, in her time, would have been an extremely big deal. The fact that they were in the eighteenth century didn't do anything to change that.

Excited hoots and hollers erupted when they finally had the box completely unearthed. The women all high fived each other as the men lifted the chest with great effort from the ground and placed it next to the hole they'd excavated.

"What's this?" Samuel asked, peering into the hole. "There's more here!"

They all looked down into the hole to see the top of another smaller chest and several other objects that were still mostly covered in dirt and hard to recognize.

Addie jumped into the hole next to Samuel and began pushing dirt aside with her hands. They handed the small chest to Jameson and began pulling six golden goblets from the hole. Next came silver trays, handfuls of gold and silver coins along with jewelry and loose gemstones of every kind.

"This is unbelievable. We're the ones who found the treasure. That's why it was gone when Christopher and you were digging." Susanna said to Edward.

"There's still more here," Samuel said. "We should keep digging."

"Let's bring this back to the carriage. We'll get the men out here tomorrow and they can unearth the rest. As it is, we'll be hard pressed to carry everything back." Jameson stood with his hands on his hips looking over their haul.

"Put the loose things in sacks. Jameson and I will carry the large trunk. Samuel you take the smaller one."

Susanna took the sack Edward handed her and began carefully placing the goblets and silver trays inside. Danielle and Addie were in charge of the coins.

Once they'd gathered everything, they headed back through the trees. When they reached the carriage, they found their driver sleeping soundly under the shade of a nearby tree.

"Who could blame him?" Susanna said. "We've been gone for hours. He must have been bored."

They wrestled their treasure into the carriage before waking the driver who was more than happy they were back. "I began to wonder if I'd ever see you again," he said.

"Take us to *The Dagger*, please," Jameson said.

The sun was beginning to set and the heat of the day was dissipating. Susanna was relieved. She really didn't think she'd be able to make it back to town if the heat had continued. They were all exhausted after a long day of unearthing the treasure and they settled into a happy, but quiet ride back. Smiling faces and closed eyes had Susanna imagining each was thinking about what they would do with their share of the treasure. She turned her head towards Edward, who much to her surprise, was gazing at her with a warmth and tenderness that touched her heart.

"Are you happy?" she asked him.

"I am. It was a good day."

"I'd like to take something back to Christopher," she reminded Edward.

"Let's take stock of what we found and then you can decide what would hold the most value to him and his family," he replied.

"I'm sure he'd love to have anything." She imagined how delighted he would be when she presented him with his very own treasure.

"It's the least we can do for him," Edward said. "I don't know that we would have ever found it if we hadn't met him."

"You know, you're pretty sweet for a pirate," Susanna said.

Jameson opened his eyes and chuckled from his place by the window. "Sweet. I don't believe anyone has ever called you sweet, my friend. It appears you've lost a bit of your edge."

"As have you." Edward nodded his head towards Danielle.

Susanna couldn't help but notice that he didn't deny it. She couldn't say she'd changed him, because she never believed it was possible to do so with any man. What she did believe was that he was becoming more of the man he'd always been and she'd helped bring that out in him.

By the time they reached the dock, it was quite dark. Clouds obscured the moon, giving them cover to unload their goods and get them aboard *The Dagger* unnoticed.

"What have we here?" Hawes asked, looking over the chests.

"Hawes, we've found Christopher Plumb's treasure."

"Is this all of it?" Hawes asked.

"No. Tomorrow hire a cart in town and take your best men with you. Samuel will guide you to the spot. You can retrieve whatever is left and bring it back aboard. Let's move this to my cabin until we can take stock of what we've got here."

"Aye, Cap'n." Hawes directed Lynk and a few other men who were still on deck. They carefully carried the items to the captain's quarters.

"Hawes, you're in charge. We'll be spending another night in town, but I'll be back tomorrow morning to check on everything."

"Aye, sir."

"To the tavern," Jameson said.

Susanna's eyes popped open wide as she turned to Edward.

"You said you wanted to go inside. Your wish is about to come true."

The three couples made their way through town to the tavern, where they were greeted by a raucous crowd. Tables full of men drank, sang and played games of chance. The tavern owner greeted them.

"Captain Mackall," he said, greeting him.

"Is the back room free, Joseph?" Jameson asked.

"Aye. 'Tis. You know the way. I'll send Bess back to see to you."

The group followed Jameson through a door in the back of the tavern.

"I didn't know there was a backroom," Susanna said.

"How would ye?" Jameson asked.

"Edward took me to this tavern in my time."

The room was paneled in a dark wood from floor to ceiling, but it

was still bright from the flames of candles set around the room. A large round table in the center of the room was surrounded by enough chairs for all of them to sit.

The door opened and a pretty young woman entered.

"Bess," Jameson said. "'Tis good to see ye again."

"Cap'n Mackall." She glanced around the table until her eyes seemed to focus in on Edward who sat slouched in his chair with a hand over his face. "Is that ye, Edward Sutherland?" she walked around to stand right next to him.

Edward coughed and sat up straight, avoiding her gaze. "It is I."

"Where have ye been? I've no' seen ye in months." Bess inched closer as Edward leaned away. Unfortunately for him, there was nowhere to go.

Susanna was enjoying this uncomfortable moment Edward was having. "Aren't you going to answer her, Edward?"

He eyed Susanna with a quizzical expression. "Of course, I've been at sea. This is the first time I've been back in port in some time," he informed her.

"Ye usually come searching for me as soon as ye reach the dock," Bess said as she smiled and winked at Susanna who understood exactly what the woman was getting at.

"I had business to attend to here in port." Edward cleared his throat and squirmed in his seat, looking very much like a man who'd been caught with his hand in the cookie jar. Perhaps he was hoping for help, but his silent pleading look was met with the amused faces of his friends, all of whom were holding back their laughter.

Turning away from Edward a seemingly genuine smile brightened Bess's face as she gazed at Susanna. "I can see that. 'Tis nice to meet ye, miss."

"Please call me Susanna."

"Well, Susanna, if this one gives ye any trouble, let me know. I'll be sure to help ye kick his arse out the door."

Susanna did her best to stifle the laugh that was bubbling up from inside her. She snuck a peek at Edward who had once again put his head in his hands.

Jameson rubbed Edward's back in a good-natured way that seemed to show sympathy for what his friend was experiencing.

"A round of drinks for ye?" Bess asked the table in general.

"Please, Bess. A pitcher of ale and a bottle of yer finest whisky, and bring us whatever good food is being served tonight." Jameson said.

"Good food?" She snorted at this and left the room.

"She seems nice," Susanna said, aiming her comment to Edward.

"I don't know what to say," Edward looked around the table as if hoping for some help from Jameson or Samuel.

“That’s so unlike you,” Jameson said, obviously ribbing him.

In an apparent need to change the topic, Edward lowered his voice to a whisper and asked, “What will we do now that we’ve found the treasure?”

“What we always do. Every man will get his share,” Jameson answered.

“What about the ladies?” Danielle asked.

“They will get their share as well,” Jameson assured her.

“That’s kind of you, but I just want to take something back to Christopher. If it hadn’t been for him, you may never have found the treasure.” Susanna eyed the door as it opened and Bess returned with a tray of drinks.

She placed everything on the table. “I found some *good* food. I’ll be back.”

Everyone chuckled at this, even Edward who seemed relaxed and more like himself since all of the attention was no longer on him.

“This is nice,” Susanna said. “Sitting here with all of you about to enjoy some hopefully *good* food. We could be doing this at any point in time, past, present or future, and it would still feel the same.”

Danielle looked like she was about to get a little teary-eyed. “Don’t do it,” Addie said to her. “Don’t you dare.” She sniffled and gratefully took the handkerchief Samuel handed her.

“I think we all need a good stiff drink before this turns into a maudlin occasion.” Edward reached for the whisky and filled a glass for everyone.

Susanna raised her glass. “To adventures. No matter where. No matter when.”

They all drank to that and while more whisky was being poured, Susanna turned to Edward, her voice soft and low. “This has been an adventure I’ll never forget.”

He leaned in and kissed her cheek. “Nor shall I.”

Chapter 16

The next night, after the crew had returned with all the treasure they could find, it sat in the middle of Jameson's cabin ready to be divided up. Those present included the three women, Jameson, Edward, Samuel, and Hawes, who served as the crew's representative. It was his job to make sure that the division of the treasure was fair.

Samuel counted coins and weighed gold and silver objects, placing them in piles of equal value. When he opened the smaller chest, it was filled with papers and a journal written by Christopher Plumb. Sitting on top of those papers was a golden hook. Edward picked it up and examined it.

"It really exists," Susanna said.

"So it seems," Edward replied. "So it seems." He turned to Jameson. "May I?"

"I don't see why not. Hawes, any objections?" Jameson asked.

"Nay, cap'n."

Edward smiled and tucked the hook into coat pocket.

"Susanna, I think this smaller chest would be good for you to bring back to Christopher," Edward said.

"That's perfect. It's of no value to any of you, but to him it would be the most valuable treasure he could find."

"Leave it as it is," Jameson said, noting there were valuable coins and jewels settled in among the papers.

"Thank you," Susanna said. "I'm excited to give it to him."

The rest of the loot was gone through and assigned to various piles. Once it was done and had all been documented, the crew were called in one at a time, the more important first and then based on length of time they'd been a member of the crew. Each man chose the pile he wanted, shoving it into a sack brought along especially for this occasion.

"Everyone seems very happy with what they're getting," Susanna said.

Jameson stretched his arms overhead, before rolling his head side-to-side. "They know we'll be fair about it. Keeping the crew happy is the most important thing."

After the last man had taken his share, there was still a good amount of treasure left.

"The rest of the treasure will be split between all of us, with some kept aside to make repairs to the ship when needed and to restock supplies."

"Seems like a good system," Addie said.

"It has always worked well for us." Jameson stood up from behind his desk and joined the others. "Hawes, we should get underway."

"Back to Bermuda?" Hawes wondered.

"I believe so, unless there's somewhere else we need to be."

"No, sir. Bermuda it is."

"I could use some fresh air," Danielle said. "Susanna would you care to join me?"

"I would." She reached out a hand to Edward who kissed her fingertips before letting her hand slide from his.

"You two have gotten awfully close," Danielle said as they headed down to the main deck.

"I've never met anyone like him," Susanna replied.

"He's a good man. He befriended me right away when I first got here. He's always been kind, gentlemanly and very amusing."

"I know what you mean."

"So what are you going to do about it? You are happy with Edward, happier than I've ever seen you before. You can't afford to let this one get away."

"I don't have much choice in the matter. I know you're happy here, but I know I wouldn't be and I have my parents to think about. I have to go back. Edward has already said he would not be joining me."

"Come on. You don't think you could convince him?"

"That might be a stretch."

"If anyone could fit into your life and your time, it would be him. You should really make an effort to change his mind."

Susanna knew that what Danielle was saying to her was right. She had somehow managed in this short period of time to fall in love. How lucky was that? More importantly, could she be that lucky again? Edward was the man for her and she knew it. She was pretty sure he knew it, too. Although neither of them had professed their love to this point. Maybe that would change on the return voyage to Bermuda because once there Susanna would be going home.

"If only there was a way that I could go back and forth," Susanna said, wishing with all her heart that it could be so.

"Take it from me. That is not going to work. You've got to commit to something and stick with it. I wasn't sure I should stay with Jameson but then I was given the stone, which I could use to leave if I ever wanted to. It gave me permission to do the one thing I was afraid

of doing. It gave me permission to stay here in this time with the man I love. I haven't even thought about using the stone since Morwenna gave it to me."

"Do you think she'd do that for Edward?" Susanna wondered.

"She might. You'd have to find her first to ask her."

"Isn't she at her cottage?" Susanna could feel herself getting panicky.

"Not always. I don't know where she goes, but there are times when she disappears for weeks or months on end."

Susanna didn't like the sound of that. Staying in this time any longer than she'd already been here wasn't an option. Trying to control her anxiety, she grabbed hold of Danielle's hand. "I hope she's there now. I have to get back. I'm not sure what I'm going to do with the business, but if I'm going to pursue it, I have to renew my lease on the office before they rent it to someone else." She couldn't stay here. Not for another week or another month.

"Even if they do, you'll be fine. You'll find a new location to work out of, if that's what you decide to do."

Danielle had always been able to calm her down when nerves got the better of her. "I suppose that's true, but it would be easier to stay put."

"You've got other things to work out right now. So put that one on the back burner and work on your personal life. It's more important than anything else."

"You're right. I'm going to miss you, Danielle," Susanna said, reaching for Danielle's other hand.

"I'll miss you, too. Who knows, maybe we'll get lucky and Morwenna will let us visit each other again."

A sad smile appeared on Danielle's face, causing Susanna to wrap her arms around her friend. They held onto each other and let the tears flow. Their friendship had lasted through good times and bad. They would remain the best of friends even if they were three hundred years apart.

Edward and Jameson were the only two left in the cabin.

Jameson poured them each some ale before sitting behind his desk. Edward sat in a chair facing him.

"What are you going to do?" Jameson asked.

“What do you mean?” Edward sipped his ale. He knew exactly what his friend meant. Pretending he didn’t know wouldn’t stop Jameson from quizzing him.

Jameson gazed at him over the rim of his mug. “About Susanna.”

“There’s nothing to be done. She will be going home once we get to Bermuda.” He stared into the depths of his drink hoping the subject of their conversation would change.

“And you will not be sad?” Jameson looked him straight in the eye. It was obvious he wanted the truth.

“Of course I’ll be sad, but I can’t make her stay here.” He could feel himself becoming irritated by Jameson’s questions.

“Why don’t you go with her?” Jameson asked.

He slammed his ale down much harder than he’d planned, sending it sloshing onto the desk. “What? I couldn’t possibly.”

“You could and I think you should.” Jameson leaned forward in his chair, resting his elbows on the desk. “How many times have you met a woman like her?”

“Only this one time,” he admitted.

“She’s yer perfect match. Ye would be a happy man, my friend.”

“I don’t know. I don’t think I belong there.” What would he do there? Susanna had told him there were no pirates like him in her time. He needed to feel useful and he wasn’t sure how he could achieve that three hundred years in the future.

“You’re afraid then?”

Edward bristled at this, knowing it was true but not wanting to admit it. “No. I’m not afraid of anything, you know that.”

“Then don’t let this opportunity slip through yer fingers. Think about it, Edward. Once she’s gone ye’ll never see her again.”

“Are you trying to cheer me? If so, you’re doing a poor job of it.” Trying to deflect his feelings with bad humor wasn’t working either. He’d thought about this day and night of late. She was his perfect match, Jameson was right about that. He knew it and so did she. Why couldn’t he just tell her he wanted to be with her no matter the time or place.

“I’m just trying to tell ye to think about it.”

Edward fingered the ring he’d purchased for her. It was tucked away in his pocket for just the right moment. The moment when he would tell her that he loved her. He’d give her the ring and she’d decide to stay with him, just as Danielle had decided to stay with Jameson. It was the only plan he had. It would work, or he would be a most unhappy man all the days of his life.

“Edward?” Jameson was waiting on his answer.

“Yes. I’ll think on it.”

“Good. I want ye to be happy. As happy as I am to have Danielle in

my life.”

“I don’t know if anyone can be that happy.”

Jameson chuckled at Edward’s joke, but Edward hadn’t been joking with him. He was serious. Perhaps he was doomed to a life of meaningless trysts with any woman that would have him. He knew there would never be another Susanna. She had seen through all his confidence and bravado, believed he was a better man and made him believe it too. Would he still believe it when she was gone? It was a question he sadly knew the answer to.

Edward met her on the moonlit deck of *The Dagger*. The men

were all asleep with the exception of a few who kept watch. They weren’t interested in Edward and Susanna. They kept to their duties and gave them the privacy that Edward so desperately needed.

He leaned on the deck rail, holding Susanna’s hand in his. She looked even more beautiful in the moonlight and he drank in the glow of that beauty.

“You look so serious,” Susanna said, peering into his eyes and he thought perhaps his soul. “Is everything all right?”

“All is well,” he lied.

“I don’t believe you.”

“You know me too well,” he replied.

She hesitated for a moment. “I know that there’s something I’ve been wanting to tell you.”

“What is that?” he asked.

“I know we haven’t known each other very long, but I feel like I’ve always known you.” She paused.

“And that is good, I hope.”

“Yes. It’s very good,” she assured him.

“I understand what you mean, because I feel the same way. I’ve never known anyone who intrigues me more than you. There are so many things I want to say to you.”

“Let me go first. I...I want you to come back with me...to New York.”

Edward was disappointed. He’d planned to tell Susanna he loved her and wanted her to stay here with him, but things had taken a sudden turn, throwing all of his plans overboard. “I was going to ask you to stay here with me.” He saw her smile fade and knew that his

hopes for the future would never come to be.

"I can't stay here. All of the self-doubt and the grieving are behind me now. I'm a business woman and my business is in New York. I let things slip when I thought Danielle was dead, but now that I know she's alive and happy, I need to get back to work and more importantly, to my parents. I couldn't just disappear never to be seen or heard from again. I won't do that to them."

He understood and accepted what she was saying. His own familial ties were different. He'd left home and made his own way in the world. He hadn't seen them in many years, but they knew where he was and he kept in touch with an occasional letter. Somehow he didn't think they'd miss him if he was gone. Susanna deserved every chance to be the woman she wished to be. It was something he knew she could not do in his time. It would be best to let her go. "I cannot stand in your way and I cannot go with you." Edward felt he had no choice but to protect himself from the hurt that was sure to follow him from this moment on.

"So we're right back where we started from," Susanna said.

"I'm afraid so." This was not the way he'd wanted this to go, but it would be useless now to tell her how he felt.

Susanna looked as though she might cry, but she turned away, perhaps not wishing Edward to see her tears. He could feel his own tears coming on, but he pushed them aside and looked over her head out to the ocean. The moonlight shimmered on the water in what should have been a romantic show for them to enjoy. Edward placed his hands on her shoulders. "Don't cry, love. If this were meant to be, then we wouldn't be struggling so."

"You're right and I'm not crying." The words came out in anger, or at least it's how it sounded to his ears.

His hands squeezed her shoulders before he placed his lips on her neck. He knew exactly where to place his kisses. He remembered the spot well, just below her ear, but the response he received was not what he'd expected.

"Stop. Please." Susanna stiffened in his arms.

Edward immediately moved away, dropping his hands to his sides. "I'm sorry. I thought..."

"I know what you thought, but I can't do this. I can't keep getting closer and closer with you. I have a life to get back to. We're not going to be together and I have to accept that. There's no need in making it any more difficult to say goodbye."

Edward's eyes pleaded with her, because he couldn't say the words he'd so wanted to say. His silence only served to make things worse. Susanna walked away, leaving him to wonder what he could have done to make her want him enough to stay.

Susanna's back was stiff and her gait stilted as she walked away

from Edward hoping that she could forget him when the time came for her to leave. She'd been foolishly imagining her life with him in it. She had plans for the two of them. They could travel and go on adventures of their own. Safe adventures. She'd imagined Edward learning how to use a computer and helping her run her business, but making plans for a man who was free to roam the open ocean and to live his life as he saw fit had been a mistake.

"Damn it!" There was nowhere she could go on this boat. Jameson and Danielle were in his cabin. Addie was with Samuel. She couldn't go below deck and so she kept walking in the direction of the bow, hoping she could find a hidden corner somewhere. What she really wanted to do was crawl into her bed, pull the covers over her head and have a good cry. Reaching the bow she searched, but couldn't find anywhere to conceal herself so she tucked herself under the railing, drew her knees into her chest and dropped her head onto her arms with a sigh. Susanna had no idea how long she'd been sitting there. She prayed the sun would come up soon and Bermuda would be on the horizon.

"There you are," Danielle's voice called to her.

Susanna raised her head to see Danielle rushing to sit beside her.

"Are you all right? Edward was worried about you, but didn't think you'd want to see him."

"He was right."

"What happened?"

"I don't know. I wanted to tell him how I felt, but somehow the words wouldn't come. Instead I told him I wanted him to come back with me."

"You can still tell him you love him."

"No. I can't. He doesn't want to go to New York with me, so there's no point in baring my heart and soul. Besides, I don't want him to feel bad about it."

"Too late. He feels terrible."

"The sooner I go home, the better for both of us."

Danielle didn't say anything. Like the good friend she was, she held Susanna in her arms and let her cry.

Chapter 17

St. George's harbor was filled with ships. Some arriving, some departing and some docked and being unloaded. *The Dagger* sailed into the harbor and docked in her usual spot.

The men were eager to disembark with their treasure. Some headed for the tavern, others sought the women they'd left behind in port.

Susanna had avoided Edward, not wanting to be tempted to do something she knew she'd regret and as far as she could tell, Edward was doing the same.

"Are you ready?" Danielle asked, taking her arm.

"Where's Jameson?" Susanna asked.

"He's got a few loose ends to tie up. He'll meet us at Charlotte's. Addie and Samuel will be right behind us."

"Have you seen Edward?" she asked.

"He took the skiff in shortly after we entered the harbor. He said he had somewhere to be. Were you hoping to see him?"

"No. It's best that he's not around when I leave." This was all too much. She was giving up a life with Edward and in her hurry to get away, she was leaving her dearest friend behind. She would love to spend more time with Danielle, but it was too painful to stay any longer.

"If you say so." Danielle sounded doubtful.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"I just think you two are making a big mistake. You love him and I'm pretty sure he loves you."

"He never said he did."

"Did you tell him you did?"

Susanna knew exactly what Danielle was getting at. She hadn't told Edward how she felt. None of it mattered now. She was going home, but to what? To her creature comforts. To coffee shops, taxis, television, air conditioning. She could go on and on, but it wouldn't be the same. She had hoped to have someone to share it all with. Now, Edward was gone and she would never be able to tell him she loved him. She wouldn't even have a proper goodbye.

Reaching Charlotte's house, they were greeted at the door.

"I heard *The Dagger* was in port and I was waiting for you. Did you find the treasure?" Charlotte's eyes were bright with excitement.

"We did. We'll tell you all about it, but we'll wait for Jameson."

"I see Addie and Samuel," Charlotte waved to them as they hurried down the street. "Where is Edward?" She looked directly at Susanna.

"I don't know." It was an honest answer and yet she felt guilty saying it.

"How can you not know?" Charlotte asked, a note of disapproval in her voice, but then she took a good long look at Susanna and seemed to understand that something was very wrong. "Did he do something to hurt you? Has he broken your heart?"

Susanna couldn't speak. The lump in her throat was growing harder and harder to ignore. Her heart *had* been broken, not by Edward, but by circumstances beyond their control.

"He left the ship before anyone else this morning. We don't know where he was going," Danielle explained.

"Come in then." Charlotte walked inside and went directly into the sitting room. She rang for Harold who appeared immediately. "Tea, please."

He nodded and walked away.

"Your rooms are ready and waiting for you upstairs," Charlotte said, eyeing Susanna with concern.

Finally managing to speak, Susanna said, "I'll be leaving as soon as I can."

"I'm disappointed to hear that. I thought you'd be here for a while. I was looking forward to getting to know you better."

Susanna didn't think she could possibly feel any worse, but apparently she could. "I've got a lot of things that must be done back home."

"I'm staying," Addie blurted out.

"Addie!" Susanna said.

"I know. I surprised myself, but I'm having so much fun with Samuel. I thought I'd stay a while longer. It's good research for my blog. I hope you'll take the stuff I've written back with you so it can be posted."

"Wow. I had no idea." So now her other good friend was staying in the past. She'd really be on her own. It wasn't that she didn't have other friends, but Addie and Danielle were the ones she always counted on to be there for her when she needed advice or just someone to commiserate with. Of course, she always did the same for them so this was going to be an adjustment.

"You'll at least stay the night," Charlotte said. "You can seek out Morwenna in the morning."

Susanna wouldn't disappoint Charlotte. "All right. I'll do that."

Everyone seemed to be looking at her with expressions that ranged from pity to irritation. Or maybe she was just imagining it.

Edward had to get as far away from St. George's as he possibly

could. Borrowing a horse from a friend, he rode to Hamilton hoping that once there he could resist the temptation to see Susanna once more before she could leave.

He cursed himself for not saying what he wanted to say and for not giving her the ring he'd been so happy to find in Charleston. Instead it sat in his pocket where his fingers continuously toyed with it. Life without Susanna in it seemed dim. All of his hopes and dreams for the future now seemed to exist without reason. He dismounted from his horse as he reached Hamilton's harbor and walked to the nearest stable where he would keep the horse until he was ready to return to *The Dagger*.

Once the horse was safely secured, he headed to a favorite tavern where he hoped to drink away his sadness.

"Edward Sutherland! I have no' seen ye for some time," a pretty serving girl stopped at his table. He'd picked one in a far corner where he hoped no one would see him or wish to speak with him.

"Good day to you, Estelle."

"Where have ye been and why do ye look as though yer dog has died?"

He shook his head. "I wish to be left alone."

"Woman trouble, aye?" Estelle set her tray down on his table and sat across from him. "Ye may as well tell me about it. I'll not leave ye here looking as ye do."

Edward closed his eyes and let out a sharp exhale. "She did not care for me enough to stay with me." Those were the only words he could muster.

"There has to be more to it than that," Estelle said, placing a comforting hand on his arm.

"There is," Edward admitted.

"Do ye love her?" she asked.

"I do." His heart felt as if it had been pulled from his chest. Why hadn't he told her when he'd had the chance?

"Then ye must tell her."

“It’s too late. She’s leaving and will not return.” There was nothing he could do to stop her.

“Then I’m sorry for ye.” She set her tray down and sat opposite him.

“Don’t be. I was a fool to let myself fall in love.” It had surely been a mistake and one he hoped never to make again.

“Love makes a fool of us all at least once, but when ye truly find the right woman, love will make ye the happiest of men.”

“I thought she was the right woman.” Everything about her had shouted it to him.

“She may still be. Have ye laid yer heart bare? If ye have no’, then ye should.”

“What good would it do?” he asked, feeling lower than he ever had.

“If she feels the same for ye, then perhaps she’ll stay after all.”

“And if she doesn’t?”

“Then at least ye’ll ken it.”

“Estelle,” the barkeep called.

“I must get back to work.”

“Thank you, Estelle.”

She stood and patted his shoulder before walking away.

Edward drank some more and thought some more. It was after midnight when he crawled into bed at the local inn. Tomorrow he would go back to St. George’s to find Susanna. He had to say all of the things he’d wanted to say on the ship. This time he would tell her he must speak first and that she should listen because he loves her and he’s never loved anyone before.

He laid his head on his pillow and thought about that. There had been times when he’d thought he was in love, but now that he looked back on it and knowing how he felt for Susanna, he hadn’t been in love at all. He relaxed into the pillow and closed his eyes. He would say those words to her and she would change her mind. He was sure of it.

The next morning, Susanna was too nervous to eat breakfast.

Danielle joined her outside as she waited for Charlotte’s carriage to take her to Morwenna.

“What are you going to do if she’s not there?” Danielle asked.

“She has to be. I have to go home.” She could feel the panic building in her chest. She couldn’t stay here. If she did she might see Edward again and that would break her heart more than it was already broken. “The only reason I came here, was to see you.”

“And I’m so happy you did. I understand why you want to go back. You know I’ll miss you, right?” Danielle asked.

“And I’ll miss you. What am I going to do without you?”

“You’ll manage. You are perfectly capable of running that business on your own, so don’t even think about giving up on it—unless there’s something else you’d rather be doing.”

“It was our dream. I remember when we first talked about going into business together. We wanted to travel and we wanted adventure.”

“We got both,” Danielle said.

The carriage arrived at the front of the house. Susanna had already said her goodbyes to the others. She stood gazing at her friend for the longest time before throwing her arms around her for a big hug. Letting go was going to be hard, but knowing that Danielle was happy was all that mattered.

“Maybe someday I’ll come back for a visit,” Susanna said.

“You better,” Danielle replied, kissing her cheek.

“This is the worst,” Susanna said. She was saying goodbye to her friend, and it would probably be for the last time. She was also saying goodbye to Edward and the life they could have shared had they not been so stubborn.

John opened the carriage door and gave Susanna a hand up before closing it behind her. The chest she was bringing back for Christopher Plumb sat on the seat opposite her alongside the pack holding all the modern things she had brought along. She gazed out the window at the house and then at her friend, whose sad smile brought fresh tears to her eyes. “I love you,” she said as the carriage whisked her away.

As they pulled up in front of the small cottage, the door opened and Morwenna appeared.

“Are you ready to go back?” she asked.

Unable to speak, Susanna could only nod her head.

“Come in then.”

She retrieved the chest which, although it was heavy, she could manage to hold. Morwenna took it from her, carrying it with ease.

John turned the carriage around and drove it away. Susanna watched until he was out of sight before entering Morwenna’s cottage.

“We will do as we did when you arrived in this time. There is no storm today, so we’ll have to make our own.”

“Is this going to work?” Susanna asked, feeling every nerve in her body screaming at her.

"Of course. If not, then you will stay here."

"No!" Susanna shouted. "I can't stay."

"Calm down. I have work to do." She motioned to an uncomfortable looking wooden chair by the window. "Here. Sit down."

Susanna did as she was told and waited. It seemed to be taking forever as Morwenna gathered the things Susanna guessed would create the storm. "How does this work?"

"You wouldn't understand," Morwenna said.

"I think I might. You're gathering all the things you need to make a storm."

"Wrong," Morwenna said with a laugh. "I'm gathering all of the things I want to take with me to your time. I'll be staying there a while."

"Oh. How long is it going to take?" Susanna asked.

"You ask a lot of questions. Be grateful I allowed you to come here in the first place and be grateful I am taking you home."

Susanna thought it best to keep her mouth shut. Morwenna finished what she was doing and then raised her hands up high, shouting words that Susanna didn't understand. Soon thunder rumbled off in the distance.

"It's coming," Morwenna said.

Lightning flashed as the thunder moved closer. It seemed to be right outside the window. Susanna could feel the earth move as the sounds reverberated around the cottage. The wind howled, the lightning flashed and a loud roar passed through the house. As it subsided, the air which had become heavy, was now light and fresh. Sunshine beamed through the window and Morwenna relaxed her arms down by her side.

"Shall we see where we are?" she asked.

"Shouldn't we be in Bermuda?" Susanna asked.

"Yes. We will be in Bermuda, but which Bermuda?"

Susanna was confused by this and more than a little shaken. How many Bermuda's were there?

Morwenna opened the door. "You're in luck. We have traveled to the correct time."

Susanna stood and walked to the door.

"I have masked your treasure. You wouldn't get through customs with it as it was. Once you reach your destination, it will be your treasure chest once again."

"Thank you."

"I will leave you alone so you can change. When you are done, close the door and walk to the end of the road. You can find someone to drive you to the airport." Morwenna walked out, leaving her alone

in the cottage.

She was stunned by all that had happened, but she hurried to get changed and out of the cottage. She had to get back to New York and the sooner, the better.

Edward entered Charlotte's home to find everyone eyeing him

with pity.

"She's gone," Charlotte said. "I'm so sorry."

He couldn't believe he'd missed her. "So soon?"

"Yes. She left this morning."

"How do you know she's gone?" he asked.

John told us Morwenna was there when they arrived.

"I have to see for myself."

"I'll have John drive you. He'll bring the carriage around for you."

"That won't be necessary." Edward bolted out of the house and mounted his horse with a leap, urging him to run down the road he knew would bring him to Morwenna. It couldn't be too late to stop Susanna. He had to find her.

As he approached the cottage, his worst fears came true. The house was empty. Morwenna was gone and so was Susanna. Once again he'd managed to make a mess of things. Why had he stayed in Hamilton last night? He should have ridden back then. If he had, he could have stopped her, but he hadn't and now he would never see her again. He'd never hear her voice or hold her hand. He reached into his pocket and took out the ring he'd hoped to give her. He would keep it as a reminder of what a fool he'd been to let the woman he loved above all others get away.

Edward knew his life would continue on, but it would never be the life he'd wanted to have with Susanna. He hung his head as he turned back towards Charlotte's house.

Chapter 18

Susanna had been home for more than a month when she received a phone call from Christopher Plumb. She'd visited with him briefly when she returned, bringing him the chest and telling him all about what they'd found.

He'd been overjoyed to receive it and had held each of the letters as though they were more precious than the jewels. He told her of his plans to open a pirate museum in honor of his ancestor. The phone call today was unexpected, but in a good way.

"I wanted to invite you to come down to Charleston," he said. "I'm having a grand opening of the museum and thought you should be here."

"How did you manage to do it so quickly?" she asked.

"I had a lot of help from my family and a friend who owns a building in Charleston near the dock. He donated the space for the museum, which was a big help. So will you come?" he asked.

"Of course, when is it?" she asked.

"This weekend. I hope you can make it."

"I wouldn't miss it."

"Good. I'll send you all the info and I look forward to seeing you there."

A weekend away would be a nice break from all the work she'd been doing since getting back. She'd had her doubts about keeping the business going, but if nothing else, she at least could give it another try and if it didn't make her heart sing, she'd find something else to do. She hadn't been able to renew her lease, but she had some prospects lined up for her new office. In the meantime, she was busy finding new clients. If she was lucky she'd have everything in place for the holidays with plenty of parties to plan. She might even need to hire some help in the office. Things were looking up in her professional life, if not in her personal life.

She made her reservations for the flight to Charleston and packed her bags. She was so happy for Christopher and looked forward to seeing the museum and celebrating the opening with him.

The rest of the week flew by and on Saturday morning she took

her flight to Charleston, rented a car and drove to the address Christopher had given her.

She parked in front of the building which looked as though it had been an old warehouse. Red bricks covered the two-story building, which had large windows that looked out onto the street. *Very nice*, she thought.

Opening the large double doors, she walked in to see glass cases displaying some of the items she'd brought back with her. Log books were displayed under glass along with the letters they'd found.

"Christopher!" she called.

"I'll be right there," he answered from above.

She wandered the displays, impressed with what he'd managed to get done. She came to one display where there were items she didn't remember being in the chest she had given him and she wondered where he'd managed to find them. One in particular caught her eye. It was the golden hook.

"Susanna," Christopher joined her at the display, giving her a hug. "It's good to see you again."

"I'm happy to be here. The museum looks great."

"Thank you. It's surprising how easily it came together."

"Where'd you get the golden hook?" she asked.

"It was in the chest you brought back."

She tipped her head, gazing at Christopher. "That's strange. Edward Sutherland had it in his possession. He must have put it in the chest at some point."

Christopher shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know. I wasn't there, but if he did that, I'm grateful to him."

"I don't recognize these artifacts," she said, pointing to the case.

"That's because you didn't give those to me."

"That would explain it then."

"I bought them from a friend who needed some money."

"Really? What luck!"

"Let me buy you some lunch and I'll tell you about what I've got planned for the evening."

They left the museum and walked down the street to a nice little restaurant where they sat on a patio overlooking the water.

They started their meal with fried green tomatoes, crab cakes and a delicious sauce. Next came a seafood platter of fried oysters, fish and shrimp.

"I'm stuffed. I don't think I could eat another thing," Susanna said.

"Dessert is a must. I insist."

"I can never resist a good dessert, but we should share if you don't mind."

When the server approached them, Christopher ordered Key Lime

Pie and Pecan Pie.

"Hey, I thought we were sharing," Susanna protested.

"We are. I couldn't make up my mind." His eyes glimmered with mischief.

Susanna couldn't help but laugh. Christopher had become a good if not unexpected friend, if not an unexpected friend. When she'd visited him with the chest, they'd gotten to know each other better. She'd shared her adventures on *The Dagger* and told him about Edward. He'd been very sorry to hear that Edward hadn't returned with her. Now, here she was again, one month later enjoying a nice meal with him and sharing in his excitement about the museum.

"Have you gotten a room yet?" he asked.

"I haven't had a chance. I hope I won't have trouble finding one."

"No worries. I've got a surprise for you."

"What?" she asked, eyeing him suspiciously.

"I can't tell or it wouldn't be a surprise now would it?"

"I guess not," she replied. She looked out over the water and down the docks. Her eyes settled on *The Dagger* and a knot formed in her throat. She coughed and took a sip of water.

"Everything all right?" Christopher asked.

"Yes."

"You're looking at *The Dagger*, aren't you?" he asked.

"You caught me." She wasn't hiding her emotions very well.

"The new owner is going to be joining us tonight."

"Someone bought it?" she asked.

"Yeah, the guys who owned it wanted to get out of the tourist business and this guy has a plan to take her out on the water. I thought you'd want to meet him. It might be a good business connection."

"Well, thank you for thinking of me. It could be beneficial for both of us." Maybe she'd take a walk down to see it, but the thought of it was just too painful. Not today, but in time it would be easier.

"I think it will be." He was smiling at her again with that mischievous glimmer in his eyes.

"You're up to something. I can tell."

"Maybe I am." He was almost bursting with whatever it was he was keeping from her.

"And you're not going to share with me, are you?"

"Nope. You'll find out tonight at the opening. I'll pay the bill and we'll be on our way."

"Thanks for lunch."

"It's the least I can do for the woman who brought my family history to life."

"It was my pleasure. I didn't do it to get a free lunch," she teased.

Christopher held her chair for her while she stood and got her purse. Walking back to the museum with him she thought about having walked this same path with Edward when they'd been in Charleston together. Would she ever stop thinking about him? It hadn't happened yet. Since she'd been back, she'd thought about him every day. Always reminded of him, it seemed there was no place she could go to avoid her memories. In such a short time he'd become the most important person in her world and she'd let him slip away. It was something she would have to live with no matter how hard it was.

Once back at the museum, she helped Christopher with some last-minute things like folding and putting together information packets for those who'd be attending tonight's party.

"That was the last one," she said. "I think I'm going to go for a walk, if you don't mind."

"Not at all, as long as you don't forget to come back."

"I'll be here. I've just got some reminiscing to do."

"I understand."

She wandered down to the shops on King Street, then down Rainbow Row and from there to the little tavern where she'd shared dinner with Edward. She wouldn't cry, she'd done enough of that. And what was the point? It wouldn't bring him back to her.

She sat on a bench in a small park and her mind wandered back to her time in Bermuda. It had been the adventure of a lifetime. She smiled at the memories, but felt the sadness that always accompanied them. As the sun dipped low in the sky she thought, *I should get back.*

The party was in full swing when she opened the door and entered. A small jazz band played in a back corner where Christopher had created a small dance floor, which people were already making use of. A bartender was pouring drinks, while servers walked the room with trays of hors d'oeuvres.

"You're back." Christopher joined her to survey the room.

"Looks like it's a success."

"I'd say so. Mingle and have fun. My friend is here. He'll find you soon I'm sure."

Susanna went to the bar for a glass of champagne.

"Susanna."

That voice. It couldn't be. She spun around to see the man she never thought she'd see again, standing there in front of her.

"You're here." She put the champagne down and was in his arms. All of the sadness she'd felt for the past month vanished in an instant. "How did you get here?"

"It's a long story, but only because I spent the better part of a month waiting for Morwenna to return to her cottage. I hadn't told

anyone my plans and then one day out of frustration I told Danielle. She was shocked that I hadn't used her stone again. I don't know why I hadn't thought of it."

"So you used it to get here?"

"Yes and this time I didn't end up on a ship to New York. I landed here in Charleston."

"I see you've met my friend," Christopher said, joining them.

"This is your friend? Edward, did you buy *The Dagger*?"

"Christopher was kind enough to purchase my treasure and help broker the deal for *The Dagger*. I never thought I could become captain, but now I am and I'm hoping you'll join me."

"He plans to do moonlight cruises, whale watching tours and pirate cruises during the day for families."

"Edward, that is wonderful," Susanna said. She was still having a hard time believing he was standing in front of her, holding her hands in his and gazing at her with so much love in his eyes. At first she thought he was here just for a visit. She was so shocked to see him that she had a hard time wrapping her brain around the fact that he was right in front of her, but now it was all crystal clear. He was here for her and he was staying. "Christopher, would you mind letting me speak to Edward alone for a few minutes. We'll come find you when we're done."

"I'll be chatting up the guests," he said, smiling as he walked away.

"Edward, I have something to tell you," she said.

"I have something to tell you and this time I'm going first." He held a finger to her lips to stop any protest that may erupt. "Susanna, the last time we spoke aboard *The Dagger* I wanted to tell you that I love you, but the words got stuck in my throat because I wasn't sure you felt the same."

The fluttering feeling in her belly was growing stronger. The joy she was feeling in that moment, knowing that Edward loved her and wanted to be with her was about to burst forth. "I do feel the same and I wanted to tell you that I love you that very same day. I can't believe how we let our insecurities get in the way. How different the past month may have been for both of us had we only managed to say those words to each other."

"I'm saying them now and I'll tell you every day. I love you, Susanna." Edward reached in his pocket and removed a ring Susanna had never seen before.

"I bought this for you in Charleston and I planned to give it to you before you left, but I didn't. I want you to have it now."

"It's beautiful, Edward. I love you, too."

He placed the amethyst heart ring on her finger and then kissed her hand, before pulling her into his arms and kissing her lips. All the

longing and passion they'd both had for each other was expressed in that moment. She held tight to him as he hugged her and whispered in her ear, "Will you join me tonight on *The Dagger*?"

"You know I will." This was the surprise Christopher was talking about. It was the best surprise of her life and one she would always remember.

The sound of applause from those crowded around them was unexpected. They looked up to find people in the room had surrounded them.

"That's the most romantic thing I've ever heard," an older woman said, elbowing the man next to her and wiping a tear from her eyes.

"All right, you two. Why don't you get out of here?" Christopher's smile as he approached them couldn't have been any bigger. "I think you've earned some privacy."

"Thank you for everything," Edward said.

"It was my pleasure. I get the feeling the two of you are going to be a big part of my life."

"Just try and stop us," Susanna said.

"Go on now. Next time I see you, I expect to hear your thoughts on *The Dagger*."

"Good night," Susanna said.

Edward doffed his tricorne cap to Christopher before taking her hand and walking out the door.

"You still have your pirate clothes on," she said.

"They are just my clothes, Susanna," he teased. "And I am running a pirate ship here in port."

Susanna laughed at this and thought how lucky she was to have him back, when she thought she'd lost him forever.

They approached *The Dagger*, which was brightly lit by strings of lights along the rail and across the mast.

Edward watched with delight as Susanna gasped upon seeing it.

"It's so beautiful," she said.

"Wait until you see what I've done with the captain's quarters." With help from Christopher, he'd designed the cabin with Susanna in mind. It was his home now and he hoped it would be hers as well. "I hope you like it."

"I'm sure I will."

He opened the door to reveal a large captain's bed centered below the windows that were once behind Jameson's desk. He'd added a bathroom, complete with a roomy shower.

Susanna was silent.

"You don't like it," he said, feeling unsure.

"I love it," she gushed.

"I was hoping you'd live here with me, unless you'd rather have a house."

"No. This is perfect. A house can come later."

"Yes, when we have little ones we will definitely need more room."

"Are you asking me to marry you?"

"I'm not doing a very good job of it, but yes. Would you do me the honor of being my wife?"

"Oh, Edward, I would love that more than anything. Yes. Yes, I will be your wife."

He took her into his arms, kissing her with all the passion and love he'd been holding just for her. "Every day with you will be an adventure. I promise to make you the happiest woman in your time or mine."

"You can start by showing me how comfy this bed is." Susanna raised one seductive eyebrow, which was all Edward needed to see before swooping her up into his arms and gently placing her on their bed.

Epilogue

The sun had set on the Port of Charleston. As a full moon rose, the first moonlight cruise of the season was about to take place aboard *The Dagger*. The ship was lit from stem to stern with strands of twinkling lights. Small triangular pirate flags festooned the bar and the tables as the waitstaff—dressed in appropriately festive attire of black slacks, white shirts and bow ties—saw to the needs of those on board. A banquet of the finest food and drinks was offered to all and calm seas would await them once they'd left the dock.

Edward greeted their guests as they arrived aboard while Susanna checked that every detail was exactly as planned. Many of the city's most important citizens arrived dressed in formal attire and wearing excited smiles as they boarded and took in the fantasy world of pirates created especially for them. With everything ready for the party, she could focus her attention on the handsome pirate across the deck.

Once the final passengers had boarded, the gangplank was raised and the crew readied the ship to sail out of the harbor. It had been a lot of work, but Edward had managed to make her seaworthy. Although on first glance, the ship had seemed to be in perfect condition, it appeared that it had been docked here in Charleston for years and little had been done to make her safe enough for ocean travel, even if it was only for short trips.

Susanna noticed that the crewmembers were behaving a bit oddly, sneaking peeks at her and smiling before whispering to each other.

"What is up with them?" she asked Edward.

"I don't know what you mean?"

"They're either planning a mutiny or I've got my dress on inside out."

"I'm sure it's the mutiny," Edward teased. "Turn around and let me see the back of your dress." He held her hand as she spun around and when she turned back to face him, said, "Maybe you should go up to our quarters and change your dress. It looks like you might have a tear here in the back."

"What? This is a brand new dress." She'd purchased it especially for this special occasion. Edward waved his hands, shushing her away.

Susanna eyed him with suspicion, but thought she should double-check her outfit to be on the safe side. She hoped she had another dress that she could change into or she would be stuck wearing the one she had on.

Walking to the steps that would lead to the quarter deck, Susanna smiled as she watched those on board chatting animatedly. Music played softly in the background. She'd hired a local DJ for the night with the understanding that the music would match the mood. Once people had eaten, livelier music would be played for those who wished to dance. Champagne was being served by their staff. Everything looked perfect and Susanna was proud of what they'd accomplished. Through lots of hard work, she and Edward had put together a complete schedule of events for the next six months. Rather than rebuild the business in New York, she packed up her life and moved to Charleston. She could be a party planner from anywhere and this was the place she wanted to be. Edward, it was turning out, was a very good businessman. He was charming, knowledgeable and had learned a lot about the world of party planning in a very short time. If her dress was the only snafu of the evening, she'd be one very happy woman.

Susanna opened the door to their cabin and couldn't believe her eyes. There on the bed was a most beautiful wedding gown. It hadn't been there a short while ago, so it was clear that Edward had been planning a surprise for her. They'd planned on getting married as soon as things settled down. She shook her head in disbelief. He was always surprising her, but how did he know what size dress to get? She'd been looking at gowns at one of the shops downtown and had narrowed her choices, but was waiting until they had set a date to make her final decision. He must have contacted the shop, because the dress she was seeing was the one that was at the top of her list.

Were they getting married tonight? There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," she called.

"Edward thought you might need some help with your dress." Danielle, entered the room absolutely beaming.

"Danielle?" Susanna couldn't believe her eyes. "Is it really you?"

"It is."

"How are you here? Why are you here?" Her head was spinning. When she'd left Bermuda she hadn't expected to see Danielle again.

"Morwenna helped me out. Edward managed to get a message to me through her and when she found out what was happening she gladly sent me with a stone that works in both directions."

"I'm really getting married tonight?" Susanna's mind was just starting to grasp what was going on and why everyone had been acting so strange. It wasn't a mutiny. It was a wedding.

Danielle's eyes sparkled and she seemed to bubble with joy. "You are and this is the most romantic thing I've ever seen. Are you surprised?"

"That's putting it mildly." Susanna hugged Danielle, so happy that her best friend was going to be with her when she took her vows. "Will you be my maid of honor?"

"You know I will. Let's get you ready. *Mr.* Sutherland is waiting for you on deck."

Danielle helped her into the wedding gown, which thankfully fit perfectly. She laced up the back and held the train up as Susanna turned to look in the mirror. She thought about being at the inn in Charleston when Edward had undone her dress for her because she couldn't reach. It was a sweet memory and one she would always hold dear.

"This is all so unexpected," Susanna said, feeling her eyes well with happy tears.

"No crying," Danielle said. "We don't want you to ruin your makeup."

"Right." She took the tissue Danielle handed her and dabbed at her eyes, being careful not to smudge her mascara.

"You look beautiful, but there's one more thing." Danielle went to the closet and opening the door reached in and emerged with a bouquet of beautiful peach peonies, Susanna's favorite flower.

"When did you get here?" Susanna asked, wondering how much her friend had to do with all of this.

"Earlier today."

"So you didn't help Edward with any of this?"

"Not a thing."

"He really thought of everything, didn't he?" Susanna was overcome with emotion. She loved Edward so much. When she thought she'd lost him for good, Susanna had been miserable and then he arrived back in her life changing her world for the better in every way.

"Oh, you don't know the half of it. That man loves you so much." Danielle adjusted Susanna's hair as she set her veil in place.

"He really does, but what do you mean I don't know the half of it?"

Danielle only smiled and said, "You look so beautiful. Edward will be so pleased that his plan worked out so well." She handed Susanna the bouquet, opened the door and as Susanna passed, she lifted the train and carried it as they made their way out of the cabin.

Looking down at the deck, Susanna was shocked to see her parents waiting for her at the foot of the steps and gazing up at her. Her father waved and blew her a kiss. Music began to play as she took the stairs

to the deck below where she received a big hug from her mother and father. Her father offered his arm, which she took. With Danielle leading the way, Susanna walked towards Edward who stood in front of a flower-filled archway that looked out on the ocean. Standing at his side, was Jameson Mackall. The full moon expected that evening had risen. Without a cloud in the sky, it cast an ethereal glow on *The Dagger*. The night couldn't be more perfect.

Much to Susanna's surprise, Christopher was the officiant of the wedding. He winked at her. "Don't worry, I got my certificate online, so this is all legit."

Her father gave her hand to Edward before going to sit with her mother.

"Edward, I can't believe you did all of this for me." She fought to hold back the tears of joy that threatened to spill from her eyes.

Edward's thumb brushed an escaped tear from her cheek and lingered there as he gazed into her eyes. "I love you, Susanna. I didn't want to wait another day to marry you. I hope you don't mind."

"How could I mind? This is the most beautiful thing anyone has ever done for me and I want more than anything to be your wife." Susanna looked out at those who had gathered for this special occasion. Her hand flew to her mouth as she spied Charlotte, Addie and Samuel seated in the front row. She blew them all a kiss before turning back to Edward.

Christopher began the ceremony and by the time they got to the "I do's" there wasn't a dry eye on the ship. Edward slipped the wedding ring on Susanna's finger and Christopher finished the ceremony by handing Edward a small gift box.

Edward opened the box and looked up at Christopher with a shocked expression. "The golden hook."

"The real one is in the museum, but it will always belong to you. I had this gold replica made especially because I thought it suited you. I put it on a chain so you can wear it around your neck. It's a reminder that when you met Susanna, it was as though you were fishing with a golden hook. You will never be lonely, you will always be loved and your life will be richer in every aspect because you have each other."

"That's so beautiful, Christopher," Susanna said, wiping a tear from her eye, "but aren't you forgetting something?"

"I didn't forget," he said, winking at Susanna. "Edward, you may kiss the bride."

As their lips met, Susanna couldn't believe she was now Mrs. Edward Sutherland. As unbelievable as it seemed, her life was exactly as she'd always wanted it to be.

Instead of rice, their guests tossed flower petals as they passed.

"Where are we going?" Susanna asked.

“We are going to celebrate with our guests on our very first moonlight cruise.”

“Edward how did you get in touch with my parents?”

“I used your phone.”

“My phone? You don’t know how to get into it.”

“You forget, my love, I am first and foremost always a pirate.”

With a laugh, Susanna threw her arms around her pirate husband for a long, lingering kiss while their guests cheered and the moon sparkled on the water.

Also by Jennae Vale

The Thistle & Hive Series

A Bridge Through Time

A Thistle Beyond Time

Separated By Time

A Matter of Time

A Turn In Time

All In Good Time

A Long Forgotten Time

Awakened By Time

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A Thistle & Hive Christmas

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Wanted

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Stand Alone Books

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A note from the author

Thank you so much for reading *The Golden Hook*. If you enjoyed Edward and Susanna's story and have a minute to spare, I would really appreciate a short review on the page or site where you bought the book. Your help in spreading the word is greatly appreciated. Reviews from readers like you make a huge difference in helping new readers find stories similar to *The Golden Hook*.

If you'd like to know when my next book comes out and want to receive occasional updates from me, then you can sign up for my newsletter here: <https://www.subscribepage.com/w4j6s3>

About the Author

Jennae Vale is a best selling author of romance with a touch of magic. As a history buff from an early age, Jennae often found herself day-dreaming in history class and wondering what it would be like to live in the places and time periods she was learning about. Writing time travel romance has given her an opportunity to take those daydreams and turn them into stories to share with readers everywhere.

Originally from the Boston area, Jennae now lives in the San Francisco Bay area, where some of her characters also reside. When Jennae isn't writing, she enjoys spending time with her family and her pets, quilting, and daydreaming, of course.

<https://www.jennaevaleauthor.com>



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